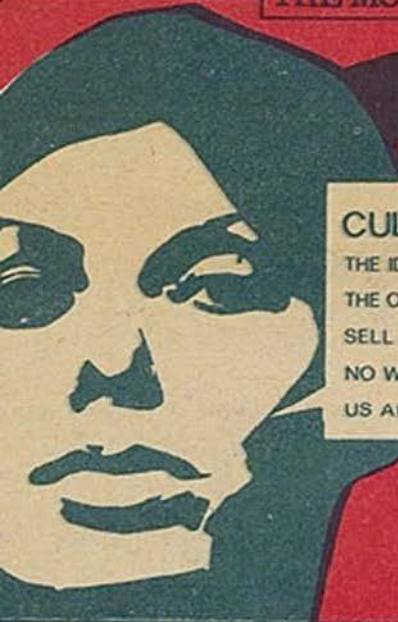


THE GLOBAL SIXTIES IN SOUND AND VISION

MEDIA, COUNTERCULTURE, REVOLT

Edited by
Timothy Scott Brown and Andrew Lison

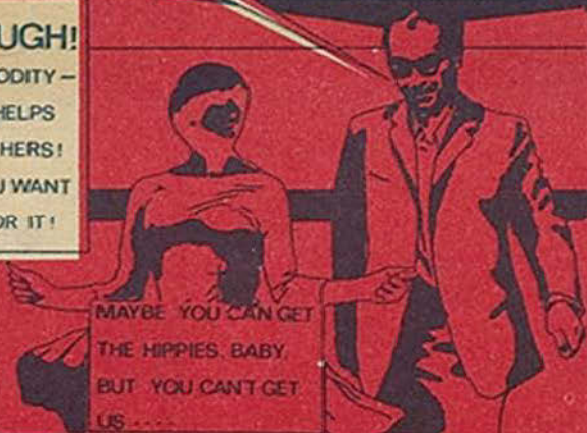
IDEOLOGY TRIES TO INTEGRATE EVEN
THE MOST RADICAL ACTS



CULTURE? UGH!

THE IDEAL COMMODITY -
THE ONE WHICH HELPS
SELL ALL THE OTHERS!
NO WONDER YOU WANT
US ALL TO GO FOR IT!

HOW RIGHT YOU ARE TO STEAL
BOOKS! CULTURE IS EVERY-
BODY'S BIRTHRIGHT



MAYBE YOU CAN GET
THE HIPPIES, BABY,
BUT YOU CAN'T GET
US...

BUT TOTAL REPRESSION CREATES
A LANGUAGE OF TOTAL DISSENT

BAR

WHAT ABOUT A
MOVIE?

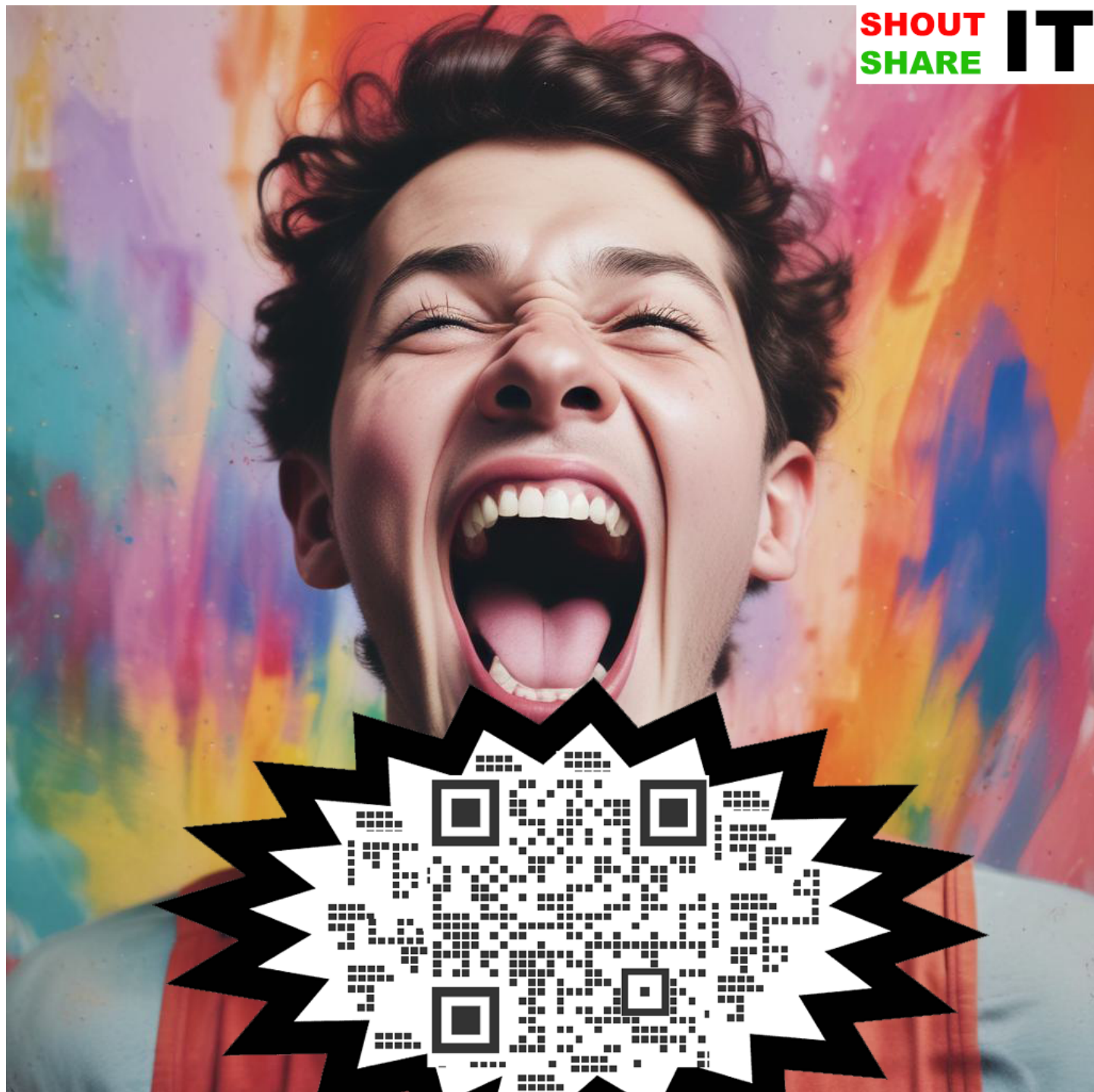
PHEW! THAT
WAS A CLOSE SHAVE!



NO, THERE'S ONLY A
GODARD ON AND HE'S
JUST ANOTHER BLOODY
BEATLE. C'MON, LET'S
GO BACK TO MY PLACE



SHOUT **IT**
SHARE



The Global Sixties in Sound and Vision

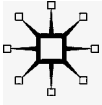
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Media, Counterculture, Revolt

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palgrave
macmillan



THE GLOBAL SIXTIES IN SOUND AND VISION

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INTRODUCTION

The Global Sixties in Sound and Vision: Media Counterculture, Revolt

Timothy Scott Brown and Andrew Lison

Interpretations of the “global 1960s” that ignore the seminal influence of the arts—both their popular and avant-garde iterations together—are no longer adequate. Student activism in the space of the university and the street made up only part of the broad antiauthoritarian conjuncture that would famously come to a head in 1968, and not necessarily the most important part; arguably more fundamental was a broad democratization of the means and ways of cultural production in which not only artists but also youthful creators and appropriators of popular culture played a leading role. These cultural actors were not mere adjuncts to the student left, but protagonists of cultural-political change in their own right. Their broadly antiauthoritarian (and in many cases explicitly anarchist) orientation offered a fresh, contemporary perspective that, if it hewed more closely to the ecumenical “spirit of ’68” than the dogmatic pronouncements of young Trotskyist and Maoist student sectarians, nevertheless complemented and expanded upon aspects of their political critiques. The field of activity of these cultural actors, moreover, encompassed precisely those phenomena—art and “happenings,” style and fashion, comics, movies, and music—that were most responsible for expressing and disseminating the new youth sensibility of 1968, and that provided the critical intergenerational avenues of articulation between the new youth culture and broader society. This activity, expressed in everything from the most commoditized products of mass production to the seemingly direct, yet highly orchestrated constructions of the “happening,” can also be seen as a groundswell of mediation, as new and old forms alike were marshaled in service of pressing and new cultural aims. In these terms, popular music and visual culture were two of the most important categories, often enfolding each other and many of the others as well. Not only did sound open up new visions of emancipatory possibility and vice versa, but they were also

intimately connected to the development of the stylistic modes and codes of cultural affiliation so important to the sixties counterculture.

The term “1968” has increasingly been superseded in the scholarship by the nomenclature “global 1960s,” the latter suggesting the now widely accepted premise that the big events of the year 1968 were but the tip of the iceberg of a decade or longer historical moment of antiauthoritarian upheaval, one in which the actual peaks and valleys of noteworthy activity varied from one national setting to another, and in which, in any case, “big” political events—riots, massacres, assassinations, strikes—were rather less important in their effects than long-term processes of cultural change involving mores, aesthetics, consumption, and a politicization of the myriad faces of the everyday. One pendulum of interpretation, correspondingly, swings between the relative importance of explicitly political events and the broad cultural changes that accompanied them, and between the relative merit of explicitly political forms of struggle (e.g., student and vanguard group politics) and those cultural initiatives (e.g., the counterculture, inter-/multi-media) that, while eschewing direct connection with such politicization, nevertheless possessed a politicized valence. The history of 1968 can be read in one way as a history of the moment when the shifting between the political and cultural poles coalesced, combining elements from each in new and interesting ways.¹

While the relationship between forms of visual media and sound was already long established, music—and more generally, sound—was in a sense newly inseparable, in affective (and often in concrete) terms, from the visual cultures associated with the exhibitions and “happenings” staged by artists in the sixties. The confluence of sound and vision in the sixties counterculture, like the earlier experimentation of the modernist avant-garde, represents a significant moment in the history of multimedia and collaboration between disciplines that prefigures today’s digital media convergence and emphasis on interdisciplinarity.² In comparison with the modernist avant-garde, however, it remains relatively underexamined. Indications that the 1960s were a site of profoundly novel connections between audiovisual media practices and political developments are numerous. Archie Loss’s consideration of these linkages characterizes “the close connection in this period between historical trends and events and the arts and media . . . as dialectical, each side impacting with equal force and influence on the other.”³ This was especially the case, he writes, “among the young people who found themselves rebelling against the laws and values of mainstream American society.”⁴ It is, of course, in many ways a core principle of this volume that such cross-currents between media and politics, especially youth and counterculture politics, are not limited to American culture but indeed include the majority of Western nations as well as many others, evincing the “globalizing” feel of the postwar “*pax Americana*.” Yet, if the era’s relationship between politics and an increasingly mediated culture could be said to be dialectical, it remained an unresolved dialectic. Indeed, if one of the major theoretical controversies of the 1960s, Louis Althusser’s famous assertion that the Marxist dialectic is only determined by the economy “in the last instance,”⁵ opened spaces for a variety of new left-wing political activity by questioning the straightforwardness of dialectical determination, this theoretical development seemed to find its counterpart in a multimediatric counterculture intent on exploring as many different avenues as possible.

In the auditory realm, this meant, in many cases, an emphasis on the new sonic possibilities that recording technology and electronic instrumentation afforded. With this proliferation of sound manipulation technologies, sonic experience—always already mediated (by way of, e.g., sociohistorical context, acoustics, positionality, instrumentation, and, more recently, recording technology⁶)—became reflexive in ways that visual experience already had been for some time; the recording studio was increasingly recognized as an instrument in much the same way that Hollywood cinema was already unthinkable without the editing room. As German media theorist Friedrich Kittler suggests, “The fact that cuts stood at the beginning of visual data processing but entered acoustic data only at the end can . . . be seen as a fundamental difference in terms of our sensory registration.”⁷ As he notes, this distinction would increasingly come under erasure in new ways over the course of the 1960s; the enthusiasm with which popular musicians explored these innovations in audio technology, as Kittler’s own examples of the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, Pink Floyd, and Jimi Hendrix demonstrate, shows the extent to which such sonic manipulation had become key. By contrast, Fredric Jameson’s influential analysis of postmodernism emphasizes its classical manifestations, alongside the work of John Cage, in two composers who came to prominence in the 1960s, Philip Glass and Terry Riley, but reserves the “postmodern” appellation in rock for genres of the following decade. Instead, Jameson sees “the Beatles and the Stones now standing as the high-modernist moment of that more recent and rapidly evolving tradition.”⁸ In one sense, this is accurate, especially if one looks to the modernist formal interventions of the early-twentieth-century cinematic avant-garde for comparison, but in another sense, the achievement of a fully reflexive media sensorium for what French film theorist Christian Metz, drawing on psychoanalysis, calls “the ‘perceiving drive’—combining into one the scopic drive and the invoking drive”⁹ is itself an important indicator of postmodernity.

Indeed, both popular and classical musicians embraced recording technologies in the 1960s in controversial ways.¹⁰ In 1964, pianist Glenn Gould famously stopped performing concerts to perfect his craft in the recording studio, a move that presented the classical music world with new and unprecedented quandaries, chief among which was the challenge of how musical virtuosity might alternatively be conceived, if not in terms of skill in live performance. As Gould himself noted in 1966, “If we were to take inventory of those musical predilections most characteristic of our generation, we would discover that almost every item on such a list could be attributed directly to the influence of the recording”;¹¹ it would thus only be foolish to renounce the practice itself. As Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner note, however, “Gould’s intervention was already well under way within rock and pop”¹² and, indeed, by the end of 1964, Brian Wilson, the songwriting mastermind behind the Beach Boys, would also eschew performing on the group’s tours in favor of remaining in the studio.¹³ Perhaps nowhere was this trend more apparent, however, than in the most popular band of the era—if not all time—the Beatles. Following Gould and Wilson, in 1966, the group also swapped touring largely for working in the studio, and songs like *Rubber Soul*’s “Tomorrow Never Knows” from the same year and *The White Album*’s “Revolution 9” from 1968 show the influence of both studio manipulation processes and avant-garde techniques. Similarly, this mixture

of experimentalism and pop would open up a vast range of new sonic territories to explore, and the connection between this kind of innovation and the corresponding counterculture was seemingly obvious. As producer and seminal ambient musician Brian Eno writes, the possibilities afforded by composing in the studio were “already well known by the mid sixties: psychedelia expanded not only minds but recording technologies as well.”¹⁴

Despite the more established nature of photographic and cinematic effects, visual media took on similar challenges as well, as the title of film critic and media theorist Gene Youngblood’s 1970 *Expanded Cinema* indicates. For Youngblood, building on media theorist Marshall McLuhan, cybernetician Norbert Wiener, pop artist John McHale, futurist visionary R. Buckminster Fuller, and others, this expansion was not strictly conceived as visual, but multi-medial or, as he suggests, intermedial:

When we say expanded cinema we actually mean expanded consciousness. Expanded cinema does not mean computer films, video phosphors, atomic light, or spherical projections. Expanded cinema isn’t a movie at all: like life it’s a process of becoming, man’s ongoing historical drive to manifest his consciousness outside of his mind, in front of his eyes. One no longer can specialize in a single discipline and hope truthfully to express a clear picture of its relationships in the environment. This is especially true in the case of the intermedia network of cinema and television, which now functions as nothing less than the nervous system of mankind.¹⁵

Youngblood’s expanded cinema is media in the process of becoming lifelike at the same time that Metz’s living, subjective perceiving drive itself comes increasingly under the sway of mediation. The persistence of “cinema” as the object modified by the word “expanded” thus paradoxically indicates both the continuing predominance of vision over sound and its increasingly democratized role as but one sense in an extended, multi-medial sensorium. Indeed, whereas Kittler sees postwar recording technology as catching up with cinematic innovations of the previous century, Youngblood envisions sonic innovations as key to the next generation of visual media: video. “The underlying principle in creative use of videotronic hardware might be called ‘video synthesizing,’” he writes, “just as we speak of sound synthesizing in the Moog process... Anything that can be done with sound can be done with video if the proper hardware is available.”¹⁶ Similarly, live music performances of the period would look to visual effects to enhance stage shows, especially given that many recording effects created in the studio could be difficult to reproduce in real time.¹⁷

If, as Loss suggests, the relationship between these mediatic developments and the political landscape is dialectical, for many involved in conceptualizing both media and politics at the time, what was at stake was, on the contrary, an end to dialectics. For Youngblood, the expansion of cinema was nothing less than the elimination of the subject-object relation, and with it the idea of an overarching human Spirit: “We are tragically in need of new vision: expanded cinema is the beginning of that vision. We shall be released. We will bring down the wall. We’ll be reunited with our reflection... The truth is this: that with the possibility of each man on

earth being born a physical success there is no archetypal Man whom one can use in the culturally elitist manner and each man becomes the subject of his own study.”¹⁸ Similarly, in their nearly contemporaneous analysis of the May 1968 protests in France, Angelo Quattrocchi and Tom Nairn characterized them as “the first act” of “the first revolution that demanded roses as well as bread, and therefore the greatest of all revolutions, and the last,”¹⁹ in other words, one that marked the apotheosis of the revolutionary process, simultaneously eschewing a vulgar economic determinism while demanding a wide range of reforms, both economic and cultural.

This “expanded” notion of the political in many ways corresponds to the notions of expansion in the realms of culture and media discussed above: Youngblood’s notion of expanded cinema, the conception of an expanded notion of musician-ship prompted by Gould’s withdrawal from performance, and the mind expanding impact of psychedelics that Eno notes as key to the proliferation of studio effects in popular music. Yet, despite this extension and diversification, the outcomes of these political protests, felt around the world in 1968, not to mention the sonic and visual legacies of the period, are ultimately remembered more in terms of roses than bread. That is to say, not as the “final” revolution, but instead as one of transformative cultural impact but only an incremental effect on capitalism as a system of political economy. In this sense, they initiate in the economic what is today perhaps most strongly felt in the realm of the technological, with the ongoing subsumption of an incredibly diverse range of media types and objects into the singular mediatic substrate of the digital.

In keeping with its centrality to the cultural revolution of the 1960s, a number of essays in this volume deal with popular music. In “Guitar Smashing: Gustav Metzger, the Idea of Auto-destructive Works of Art, and Its Influence on Rock Music,” Wolfgang Kraushaar links the onstage destruction of musical instruments by performers such as The Who and Jimi Hendrix to the theories of auto-destructive art propounded by the German-Jewish artist Gustav Metzger. Casting light on a little-studied, yet ongoing episode in transnational cultural history, Kraushaar opens up the relationship between British art schools and the bands formed by their students, while exploring the connections between pop art theory and pop music practice.²⁰ Jonathyne Briggs, in “Red Noise: Pop and Politics in Post-1968 France,” examines the French progressive rock scene of the early 1970s, showing how progressive rock—a genre combining musical conventions drawing on rock, jazz, and classical influences—both reflected and transformed the political ideals of the widespread protests of May 1968 in France. French progressive rock remains a significant, if somewhat obscure, touchstone for contemporary politically tinged musical practice, with minimal techno artist Ricardo Villalobos’s recent 12-inch single, “Enfants,” for example, sampling Magma founder Christian Vander’s solo piece, “Baba Yaga La Sorcière.”²¹ More importantly, the dialogue between political and musical countercultures around 1968 would, in fact, prove to be one of its more visible aftereffects on youth culture, informing considerations of the political valences of such subcultures elaborated in the British context by the Birmingham Center for Cultural Studies,²² and acting as an important precursor to the rise of punk subcultures, even as these were, in turn, reactions against progressive rock.

In making the latter observation it is also important to note, however, that if punk's rejection of the excesses of progressive rock is clear, the relationship to the sixties moment out of which progressive rock arose has frequently been misunderstood. To be sure, punk impresario of the first hour Malcolm McLaren made much of his supposedly Situationist roots, touting the events of May 1968 in Paris as an inspiration.²³ Yet, punk has long been known above all as a reaction against the sixties, against the optimism of the counterculture with its ideals of peace and love, its sense of utopian possibility, which, from the perspective of punks in mid-1970s New York or London, appeared hopelessly naïve. Punk turned sixties values on their head, replacing optimism with nihilism, authenticity with plastic-ness, love with hate, feeling for "blankness."²⁴ As Jeff Hayton shows in his contribution to the volume, however, at least where West Germany is concerned—and the point could easily be extended to punk in its original US and UK iterations—punk drew on key aspects of sixties cultural-political praxis. In "The Revolution Is Over—and We Have Won!": Alfred Hilsberg, West German Punk, and the Sixties," Hayton explodes the oft-repeated myth of punk's rupture with the 1960s, using the career of a key figure in the development of the West German punk scene, Alfred Hilsberg, to show how the so-called do-it-yourself (DIY) principle that fueled the 1960s counterculture was used by punks to create a new scene with far-reaching consequences for German musical culture.

The relationship of popular music to the sixties counterculture was refracted through music in other ways as well, some of them explicitly political, some not. In "The Sun and Moon Have Come Together: The Fourth Way, the Counterculture, and Capitol Records," Kevin Fellezs explores the history of the multiracial jazz fusion group The Fourth Way, showing how, in its racial makeup, in the spiritual interests of its members, and in its genre-bending approach to improvisation drawing on cross-cultural sources, the group enacted countercultural ideals more commonly associated with genres like folk and psychedelic rock. At the same time, Fellezs highlights the limitations of popular music as a vehicle of emancipation, even at the height of the sixties/seventies countercultural moment; not only did countercultural commitments conflict with attempts at mainstream success, but the project of "fusing" rock and jazz also revealed scarcely hidden racial tensions underneath the surface of the countercultural project.

In Francesca D'Amico's chapter in this volume, "'The Revolution will not be Televised,' but it will be Recorded: Soul, Funk, and the Black Urban Experience, 1968–1979," the relationship of popular music to race and the struggle for civil rights is explored from a different direction. Analyzing a body of late 1960s/early 1970s recordings by black soul and funk artists in which black-emancipatory themes achieved a new prominence, D'Amico shows how a genre known for themes of love and sexuality became a sensitive register of changing political and social currents. Through close analysis of recordings and lyrics, D'Amico highlights the contradictions of Civil Rights/Black Power ideology as they were refracted through popular music and the market apparatus through which it was governed. In her essay, as in those by Fellezs, Kraushaar, Briggs, and Hayton, popular music becomes not only a key vehicle of emancipatory longings but also a site of the working through of contentious social and political issues relevant to both individual national scenarios

(e.g., to race in the United States, or the content of political/countercultural movements in West Germany and France), and the global sixties more generally. In all cases, crucially, music was a key medium not only of politics, but (as in Kraushaar's discussion of Metzger's influence on The Who) also new artistic practices—and associated lifeways—with both sonic and visual dimensions.

The events of 1968 were felt in the world of cinema as well. Their effects could be found not only in mainstream, Hollywood cinema and art-house, avant-garde cinema, but also in the rise of Third Cinema, which sought to problematize these “First” and “Second” cinemas through an anti-imperialist filmic practice inspired by and coming out of the Third World, as well as a proliferation of national cinemas either explicitly or more implicitly politicized.²⁵ In France, especially, where a strong national cinematic tradition coincided with what are perhaps the most well-known demonstrations of 1968, the effects on filmic practice and theory were vast. Politically oriented, formally vanguardist filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, whose 1967 film *La Chinoise* anticipated both the events of the following year and—more indirectly—their ambivalent aftermath, would revisit these events just four years later with the 1972 *Tout va bien*, made along with Jean-Pierre Gorin at the tail end of their work together as part of the radical cinematic *Groupe Dziga Vertov*, named after the early Soviet filmmaker. In many ways, this film represented an attempt to make sense of just how everything could “return to normal” so easily after such significant political events, an attempt mirrored in French film theory's turn to poststructuralist methods of film analysis, considering, for example, the political and ideological significance of the voice-over in documentary film.²⁶

Indeed, this preoccupation with not merely signification as such but the role played by the speaking subject specifically was a main concern of continental philosophy itself in the 1960s and 1970s. Andrew Lison, in “1968 and the Future of Information,” explores the connections between poststructuralism, the legacy of May 1968, and the postwar technological and technocratic discourses of cybernetics and information theory by way of examining both mainstream cinema's links with the burgeoning late-sixties counterculture and the concurrent convergence between avant-garde practices of musical composition and rock music. Treating the 1967 film *The President's Analyst* and the musical practices of composer Joseph Byrd and his avant-rock group The United States of America as both emblematic of their anti-establishment era and indicative of the forms of neoliberal, global capitalism that would come to full fruition in the period following the protests of 1968, Lison argues for the necessity of recognizing both continuities and breaks with the radical political goals, theories, and practices formulated over this period for any liberatory political practice in today's increasingly global, digital society.

One of the key aspects of the protests of the sixties is that their concerns were formulated not only in terms of mass political movements but in relation to personal, private experience as well. In “Turning Inwards: The Politics of Privacy in the New American Cinema,” Joshua Guilford examines this turn toward the interrelation of the personal and political as manifested in the 1960s avant-garde practice of the New American Cinema, especially the films of Jonas Mekas, Edward Bland, and Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie. Reading these films and the stated aims of the New American Cinema alongside Herbert Marcuse's notion of countering

postwar American society's one-dimensionality with an aesthetic practice based on the depth of private space, Guilford highlights the political overtones of this film culture's private orientation over and against readings that see it as privileging the personal to the exclusion of all other concerns.

Chelsea Behle Fralick's "Musical & Magical Counterpoint': Language, Sound, and Image in Wallace Berman's *Aleph*, 1956–1966," meanwhile, considers technological and conceptual issues of the era, similar to those raised by Guilford's examination of the New American Cinema, by way of American artist and filmmaker Wallace Berman. Examining his only film, *Aleph*, which he would screen privately in his own home over the course of the 1960s, as a bridge between the artistic and the domestic as well as between the visual and the sonic (screenings were often accompanied by Berman's musical selections on his home stereo), she identifies it as a key work connecting California's 1950s Beat culture and its 1960s counterculture. This silent film, she argues, is nevertheless best understood through a consideration of sound in four different registers: the relation between sound and silence in the film and Berman's larger oeuvre; the visual expressions of music and sound in the film itself; the rhythmic structure of the film; and, finally, the interplay between Berman's musical accompaniment and the film during his private screenings. These "musical" aspects of the film, especially when considered alongside Berman's involvement in the Southern California jazz scene of the 1940s and 1950s, highlight the growing significance of sound in artistic productions, regardless of medium, over the postwar period, a significance that would, arguably, culminate in the late-1960s popularization of the musical counterculture.

The vibrant counterculture, alongside New Left political formations in the United States, provided fertile territory for European art cinema auteurs. David Fresko's "Magical Mystery Tours: Godard and Antonioni in America" examines such encounters in Jean-Luc Godard's *1 A.M./One American Movie* (1968) and *One Plus One/Sympathy for the Devil* (1968), which intercuts footage of the Rolling Stones with shots of the Black Panthers, and Michelangelo Antonioni's countercultural classic, *Zabriskie Point* (1970), which captures the *dénouement* of the California counterculture with its impressionistic treatment of sex, drugs, and real estate development in the Mojave desert. Godard and Antonioni's European left-wing sensibilities left them at once sympathetic to and estranged from the American counterculture, and their visits to the United States drew criticism from both the right and the left. Instead of claiming to represent the countercultural left's place in American culture, Fresko argues, the auteurs used their time in the United States to explore their own work's relationship to questions of ideology and aesthetics. Key to this was the disjuncture between sound and image achieved through the ongoing experimentation with montage. While the nearly six-minute-long explosion sequence set to Pink Floyd's "Come in Number 51, Your Time Is Up" in Antonioni's film is perhaps the most memorable example of this technique, Fresko argues that Godard's films both partake in and expand upon this logic as well, in a sense responding critically to the spectacular nature of Antonioni's own attempts. Film also mirrored the changing Zeitgeist in other ways, as Kathrin Fahlenbrach demonstrates via cognitive-linguistic analysis in her chapter "Utopia and Dystopia in Science Fiction Films around 1968." Concerned as it was with the possibilities and perils of technology,

Fahlenbrach argues, the science fiction film was uniquely able to mirror the hopes and anxieties that fueled the protest movements of the 1960s.

Outside of film and popular music, the confluence of sound and vision in the postwar period also gave rise to a number of mixed-media artworks, underscoring the ways in which the era anticipated the multimedia convergence of today's digital age. While perhaps the most memorable work in this area is Robert Rauschenberg's *Broadcast* (1959), a painting incorporating three working radios, Melissa L. Mednicov explores a lesser-known piece in her "Jukebox Modernism: The Transatlantic Sight and Sound of Peter Blake's *Got a Girl* (1960–1961)," a painting that includes an accompanying copy of The Four Preps' 45 RPM single of the same name. Mednicov charts a British reaction to the increasing postwar hegemony of American popular music (and the images of American pop stars that went along with it) just prior to the moment when the UK would begin to challenge the United States at its own pop cultural game. Here, the combination of sound and image—the record was meant to be played as the painting was viewed—reflects the multimediatic breadth of the postwar American challenge to European culture. Yet, at the same time, she argues, the musical recording, as a production of reproduction, highlights the intimate connection between production and repetition in both pop culture and pop art, giving not only artists but also mass-cultural audiences a language that they can likewise (re)appropriate to express their own concerns.

Alongside mixed-media and pop art, conceptual art was another key aspect of the art of the postwar period. Joshua Shannon's "Uninteresting Pictures: Art and Technocracy, 1968" takes up with some of the era's most important themes in postwar art history, namely, the facticity of the photograph and its relationship to contingency and information theory, through a consideration of American conceptual artist Douglas Huebler, and in particular his *Variable Piece #4, New York City, November, 1968*. Examining Huebler's works in terms of their excessively methodical attempts to organize, via photography, seemingly random slices of everyday reality, Shannon demonstrates the bind of 1960s conceptual artists: they find their work haunted by (and even drawn to) the totalizing systems that they set out to parody. The photograph, theorized simultaneously as index and information, becomes the key site within the art practice of the late 1960s in which this contradiction is played out. In contrast to many considerations of the period, which simply demonstrate how old boundaries were broken down at an amazing rate, Shannon goes further, asking, in a very contemporary twist, whether, at the same time, this aesthetic, scientific, and social liberation did not itself seek new structures to take their place.

A central feature of the emerging scholarship on the global 1968 is a focus on the role of the Third World, both as an inspiration for First World radicals and a locus of antiauthoritarian activism in its own right.²⁷ While much of the emerging scholarship on 1968 outside of Europe focuses less on culture than on student politics—the latter of central importance in countries undergoing (post-)decolonization struggles, with their attendant emphasis on the "serious" politics of national liberation and rebuilding—music and counterculture played a prominent role there as well. As Samir Meghelli demonstrates in his chapter, "A Weapon in Our Struggle for

Liberation': Black Arts, Black Power, and the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival," culture was explicitly taken up as a weapon of the Third World national liberation project by individuals and regimes eager to break once and for all the psychological stranglehold of colonialism. In his analysis of this key but little-studied moment in postcolonial history, Meghelli shows how the First Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algeria became a node of transnational connection drawing together artists and radicals from far beyond the Maghreb, with American Black Panthers and jazz musicians joining filmmakers and artists from Europe and anticolonial politicians from across the Third World. Teasing out the interpenetration of the ideas of Black Power, the Black Arts Movement, anticolonialism, and Pan-Africanism, the chapter makes an important contribution to the emerging scholarship on the globalization of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, while casting light on a fresh aspect of the interpenetration of culture and politics in the global 1960s. Christopher Dunn highlights another aspect of the globalized deployment of popular music in 1968. In his chapter, "Mapping Tropicália," Dunn examines the multidisciplinary artistic phenomenon that erupted in Brazil in 1968 as its military regime tightened its grip on power. Profoundly indebted to an avant-garde tradition extending back to the 1920s, Tropicália coalesced around a group of musicians who revolutionized Brazilian song while exposing the stark contradictions of modernization under authoritarian rule.

In both the political and cultural registers, 1968 represents a significant moment of flux as well as in some ways the culmination of the global sixties, a moment when previously held distinctions between East and West, left and right, high art and low art, production and consumption, sound and vision, could no longer be maintained uncritically. Along with changing conceptions of art and politics, a wider availability of access to forms of media, whether printed, filmic, musical, or artistic, marks the period's cultural shift as one that also reached a new degree of popular mediatic engagement; the number of antiestablishment posters printed in 1968 in Paris by the emblematically named *Atelier Populaire* alone is staggering. Such developments resonate with our own, contemporary, moment, where the ability to both consume and produce similar forms of media is available to nearly anyone with access to a computer. Such forms are, furthermore, often easily distributed through the Internet, where they become subject to the apparently infinite flux of a networked culture, the sine qua non of both global capitalism and—at least thus far—any possible form of resistance to it.²⁸ This volume's reconsideration of audiovisual practices and artifacts situated around the global 1960s hopes to both shed new light on the relationship between media, aesthetics, and politics in that critical historical conjuncture, and, perhaps, offer some small glimpses of new paths forward for the 1968s to come.

Notes

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1. On the global 1960s, see Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958–c. 1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998);

- Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried, and Karl Christian Lammers, eds., *Dynamische Zeiten: Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2000); Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, *Between Marx and Coca-Cola. Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2006); Detlef Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side. Konsum und Politik in der west-deutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre* (Hamburg: Wallstein, 2006); Martin Klimke, *The "Other Alliance." Global Protest and Student Unrest in West Germany and the U.S., 1962–72* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Samantha Christiansen and Zachary Scarlett, *The Third World in the Global 1960s* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2011); and Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties. The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt, 1962–1978* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For a consideration of the 1960s from the perspective of Marxist theory, see Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s" (1984) in *The Ideologies of Theory* (London: Verso, 2008), 483–515.
2. As film scholar Anne Friedberg notes, "the concept of the 'digital' began to creep into discourse about representation and experience in the mid-1960s, but it had not yet figured as a technology for image production or postproduction" (Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 217). Similarly, December 9, 1968, marks a significant turn in computing history with Douglas Engelbart's demonstration of NLS, an experimental computer system, developed by researchers at Stanford University with support from the United States government, that incorporated many features familiar to home users today, e.g., hyperlinking and video conferencing, and introduced the computer mouse as a technology (See Douglas Engelbart and William English, "A Research Center for Augmenting Human Intellect" (1968) in *The New Media Reader* eds. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 231–246; see also Friedberg's discussion of Engelbart in *The Virtual Window*, 219–225).
 3. Archie K. Loss, *Pop Dreams: Music, Movies, and the Media in the 1960s* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999), iii.
 4. *Ibid.*, 8.
 5. Louis Althusser, "Contradiction and Overdetermination" (1962) in *For Marx* (1965), trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), 111. Indeed, the concept of "determination in the last instance" would subsequently come under assault for nevertheless remaining *too* deterministic. Fredric Jameson locates this development in the work of Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, presumably their *Mode of Production and Social Formation: An Auto-critique of Pre-capitalist Modes of Production* (London: Macmillan, 1977) (Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed., Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 354); see also Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: New Left Books, 1985), 93–148, and Jameson's connection of the two in Fredric Jameson, "Actually Existing Marxism" (1993) in *Valences of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 2010), 374. As Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff summarize their own argument, "[L]ast-instance determinism" is best understood as a way station on the road to rejecting essentialist reasoning within Marxian epistemology and social theory generally" (Stephen A. Resnick and Richard D. Wolff, *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 315 [n84]). Without veering into a technological determinism even less well regarded today than "last instance" economism, it is nevertheless interesting to note that this epistemological rejection of essentialism and determinism has been accompanied by an ongoing proliferation of media technologies, formats, and works that seemingly finds its ultimate expression

- in the digital, which has developed to act, at least in part, as a medium for previous media—a multi-medium.
6. For an overview of such issues, and many others in contemporary considerations of sound, see Jonathan Sterne, “Sonic Imaginations,” in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed., Jonathan Sterne, (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 1–17, and the volume as a whole, as well as Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 1–29.
 7. Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1986), trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 117–118.
 8. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 1.
 9. Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (1977), trans. Ben Brewster, Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 59.
 10. In addition to the developments mentioned below, of the works of the composers Jameson lists as postmodern, it is here particularly worth noting Terry Riley’s 1968 “You’re Nogood,” which, although largely unheard until its commercial release in 2000, sets a vanguardist precedent for the disco edits and remixes of the 1970s that would come to define dance music culture. Commissioned by a Philadelphia nightclub, the piece runs Harvey Naverne’s R&B song “You’re No Good” through a series of tape loops and electronic manipulations to create a 20-minute long piece that comes out somewhere between 1960s minimalism and 1970s disco mix innovator Tom Moulton (Terry Riley, “You’re Nogood,” Cortical Foundation organ of Corti 5; for more on the connections between disco and minimalism see Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 25–61).
 11. Glenn Gould, “The Prospects of Recording” (1966) in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, eds., Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (London: Continuum, 2004), 115.
 12. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, “Music in the Age of Electronic (Re)production: Introduction” in *Audio Culture*, eds., Cox and Warner, 114. See also their discussion of Gould on the previous page. In general, this volume is a particularly useful resource for those interested in the development of music and sound not only in the 1960s, but from modernity to the present day; the timeline provided in its “Chronology” section lists most of the developments discussed here, and many more.
 13. Wilson’s own studio work is, of course, renowned for its unconventional methods.
 14. Brian Eno, “Ambient Music” (1996) in *Audio Culture*, eds., Cox and Warner, 95.
 15. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1970), 41. Although not explicitly acknowledged in the book as such, Fluxus artist and writer Dick Higgins is likely Youngblood’s source for the term “intermedia.” Higgins, writing in 1965, introduces the concept by stating that “[m]uch of the best work being produced today seems to fall between media” (Dick Higgins, “Intermedia” (1965/1981), reprinted with an appendix by Hannah Higgins in *Leonardo* 34, no. 1 (February 2001), 49), highlighting the need to acknowledge an expanded mediatic framework, one that could eventually be seen as developing from the interstitial quality he emphasizes to the increasingly all-encompassing term “multimedia.”
 16. Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, 265.
 17. See Wolfgang Kraushaar’s chapter in this volume for an example of the importance of visual enhancement in the British rock scene, as well as Youngblood’s discussion of the Los Angeles light-show group Single Wing Turquoise Bird in Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, 392–396.
 18. Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, 49. He also writes, “We have come to see that we don’t really see, that ‘reality’ is more within than without. The objective and the subjective are one” (ibid., 46).

19. Angelo Quattrocchi and Tom Nairn, *The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968: What Happened, Why it Happened* (London: Panther Books, 1968), 7.
20. On this theme, see also Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art into Pop* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987); and especially the brief treatment of the Who's relationship to Metzger (*ibid.*, 100).
21. Ricardo Villalobos, "Enfants," Sei es Drum SED001. For more on the political relevance of minimal techno in general and Villalobos in particular, see Andrew Lison, "Postmodern Protest? Minimal Techno and Multitude" in *Between the Avant Garde and the Everyday: Subversive Politics in Europe 1958–2008. Series on Social Protest and Cultures of Dissent in the 20th Century*, ed., Timothy S. Brown and Lorena Anton (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 201–218.
22. For example, Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Methuen and Co., 1979).
23. See Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock and Beyond*, rev. ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002).
24. On punk, see the essays in Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay, eds., *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (London and New York: Verso, 2011); Hebdige, *Subculture*; and the essays in Roger Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).
25. In Hollywood cinema, Stephen Prince locates 1968 as a decisive year for the relaxation of restrictions on depictions of violence, writing that, in that year, "the dike burst" (Stephen Prince, *Classical Film Violence: Designing and Regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema 1930–1968* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 252). On the differentiation of the cinematic avant-garde in the post-1968 period, see Peter Wollen, "The Two Avant-Gardes" (1975) in *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies* (London: Verso, 1982), 92–104. On Third Cinema specifically, see Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema" (1969) in *Reviewing Histories: Selections from New Latin American Cinema*, ed., Coco Fusco (Buffalo, NY: Hallwalls, 1987), 56–81. On the relationship between Third Cinema and Western avant-gardes, see Robert Stam, "The Hour of the Furnaces and The Two Avant-Gardes" (1981) in *The Social Documentary in Latin America*, ed., Julianne Burton (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 251–266. For a basic overview of the impact of 1968 on both film practice and theory, see the chapter "1968 and the Leftist Turn" in Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2000), 130–140.
26. For an in-depth examination of the effects of the events of May 1968 in France on film studies, see Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture* (London: BFI, 1978). On Godard during the *Groupe Dziga Vertov* period, see Peter Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema: *Vent d'Est*" (1972) in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed., Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 120–129. For a consideration of *Tout va bien* in light of some of the concerns raised by poststructuralism see Colin McCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on some Brechtian theses" in *Screen* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1974), especially 24–26. On the analysis of documentary film, and specifically a documentary about the events of May 1968, see Pascal Bonitzer, "The Silences of the Voice (*A propos of Mai 68* by Gudie Lawaetz)" (1975/1976) in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* ed., Rosen, 319–334.
27. See, for example, the essays in *The Third World in the Global 1960s*, eds. Christiansen and Scarlett (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011).
28. See, for example, Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).

CHAPTER 1

A Red Noise: Pop and Politics in Post-1968 France

Jonathyne Briggs

In 1971, a group of French students from the École des Travaux Publics organized a rock concert at the Palais des Sports in Paris, featuring Soft Machine, Yes, Gong, and Iron Butterfly. An audience of nearly 5,000 young people was in attendance, and many of them had broken through the doors to secure the free access to the stadium promised by organizers. During Gong's set, young listeners destroyed seats as they drummed along with the band and requisitioned the concession areas in a strange replay of the occupation of the Sorbonne in May of 1968, when students occupied the campus buildings in the Latin Quarter (subsequently destroying seats in numerous classrooms there). Throughout the concert, members of the audience interrupted the music by taking the stage on several occasions, requisitioning the microphone to assert the political importance of pop music. Soon after, the contents of the concession stands rained down from the rafters, showering the audience with ice cream bars, cocoa powder, and fruit juice. By midnight, the stadium's power was cut, sending concertgoers to the exits as the remainder of the show was cancelled. The French riot police, the Compagnie Républicaine de Sécurité [CRS], had entered the area outside of the Palais to restore order and subsequently a melee broke out between members of the audience and police.¹ In his review of the event, *Rock & Folk* journalist Philippe Parginaux questioned the assumed connection between pop music and politics and the depth of young people's political motivations in France after 1968. While skeptical, especially in light of the debacle at the Palais des Sports, Parginaux nevertheless remained hopeful about the ability of pop music to motivate young people into organizing in a viable manner that would bring about social and political change.²

The relationship between pop music, which in France encompasses the range of subgenres of rock and pop, and politics was never quite clear in France during the 1960s.³ While pop musicians in other countries openly, if at times superficially,

embraced political causes during this period, in France they remained more associated with leisure and entertainment.⁴ Perhaps the most telling sign of this difference was the relative absence of pop music during the Events of May 1968, when French students and young workers took to the streets to protest against the French government, society, and whatever else they saw as blocking their path. In other national contexts, musicians were often supportive of student demonstrators and protest movements, but in France, prominent pop musicians had little positive to say about the Events.⁵ Nevertheless, many in the counterculture of the early 1970s saw a natural alliance between the ideas of pop music and the desire to transform French society. Pop music was considered a vehicle for articulating a new France as an expression of cultural utopianism that veered away from the direct and confrontational politics of May. Rather than directly overthrowing the political order, many pop musicians wanted to change the social order through the creation of new types of popular culture. Eric Drott's recent work on French cultural politics after 1968 underscores the importance of pop music as a cultural locus for rearticulating political activity in the wake of the Events.⁶ Several pop groups integrated the utopianism of pop music with the political engagement associated with groupuscules, small activist organizations that had populated the streets during May and claimed its heritage thereafter. Their efforts reveal how pop musicians, in this case progressive rock bands, carried on the 1968 ideal by connecting various forms of social protest to pop music as a method of overturning the traditional political and social order through a combination of cultural and political activism.

The Progressive Sound of May

The Events of May in France have received a great deal of attention, both from its participants, the *soixante-huitards*, and from scholars. Many interpretations of the Events focus on the cultural transformation that emerged from the street battles across France that led to a broader acceptance of more Americanized forms of consumer capitalism that had been evident in France since the middle of the century.⁷ The actions of cultural activists in the 1970s who capitalized on libertarian and Marxist attitudes expressed during May reveal the creation of a counterculture in France that carried on the cultural challenges of May. However, the difference in these attitudes divided the counterculture into different spheres representing broad trends rather than specific blocs. Those of the counterculture interested in the politics of lifestyle choices symbolized a larger European trend of the Freak Left. The Freak Left is understood as in opposition to the reorganized left in the post-1968 period, the New Left, which was more explicit in its political aims.⁸ The New Left took the political ideals of the groupuscules, especially that of worker self-production and the importance of direct political action, and in turn rejected the cultural challenges posed by the Freak Left as mere distractions from the real revolution.⁹ By sending students to organize workers into Maoist- and Trotskyist-inspired groupuscules, the New Left sought to continue the revolution in a more effective and direct manner that would create a class alliance between middle-class students and working-class laborers.

Members of the Freak Left, however, had similar intentions in their use of popular culture to unify different classes. In the late 1960s, a new subgenre, progressive rock, developed out of psychedelia, the hallucinogenic music of the hippie movement. Psychedelia combined the blues structure of rock music, the microtonality of Eastern music and the noise of electronic instrumentation and reflected the growing interest in new modes of consciousness, a combination exemplified in the work of the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, and Cream.¹⁰ Progressive rock built upon the musical pretensions of psychedelia by adding new influences such as modernist composition and *musique concrète*. An international phenomenon, progressive rock manifested many of the same ideas that defined Western counterculture during the early 1970s: musical exploration as a pathway to mental liberation and the necessary conflation of high and low culture to undermine hierarchical notions of cultural difference and create a truly democratic form of popular culture.

The utopian aspiration of class reconciliation, which had been a central aspect of the Marxist-inspired rhetoric in the streets of Paris, manifested itself in progressive rock through its integration of “serious” compositional and popular musical forms. The juxtaposition of classical instrumentation—such as woodwinds and strings—with electric instruments, including early versions of the synthesizer, is a defining characteristic of progressive rock.¹¹ According to one supporter’s assessment, it was to be “a new classical music,”¹² and in the French counterculture, the combination of the more radical elements of rock and jazz with the legitimacy and seriousness of classical music lent the genre cultural significance and validity. Such a *mélange* spoke to the aspirations of class leveling manifest in the counterculture after 1968, albeit without the more overt political rhetoric associated with the Events of 1968. For music historian Edward Macan, progressive rock, at least in Britain, exemplified a turn toward spiritual transformation as a method for changing society, and many groups in France—Magma, Catharsis, Gong, Martin Circus, and Triangle, to name but a few—stressed this ideal within their music.¹³ Through its narrative and musical complexity, progressive rock suggested a less contentious form of cultural critique. For its proponents, May 1968 was best represented by the cultural challenge that was present in the Odeon Theatre during the occupation of the Latin Quarter and not the street battles between students and police. Progressive rock in France was also deeply influenced by the sound of free jazz and the political implications of its aesthetics due to its associations with the civil rights movement in the United States.¹⁴ In France, the synthesis of jazz, perceived as a more highbrow cultural form, with popular genres reinforced the power of cultural challenge in rock music during the post-1968 period.¹⁵

The Noise of Revolution

Several progressive rock groups developed a complex aesthetic combination of free jazz, blues-based rock, and modernist musical techniques. The compositions of Magma, Catharsis, and Gong exemplify this combination of sounds and approaches and reveal the tendencies of countercultural musicians to employ particular musical motifs as a form of cultural critique. Perhaps the most commercially successful of these groups, Magma, led by drummer Christian Vander, recorded several

albums of material that blended the modernist tradition of the symphonic works of Igor Stravinsky, the choral arrangements of Carl Orff, and the improvisational spirit of John Coltrane. Magma's early albums, sprawling hour-long affairs, dealt with themes of alienation and Armageddon within extended musical pieces with the lyrics sung in Kobaïan, a language invented by Vander. Powered by Vander's drumming, Magma's sound collapsed all of these influences together within the context of a style dubbed "Zeuhl" or cosmic music. Over the course of its initial three albums, Magma dealt with themes of modern industrial anomie, the need for environmental conservation, and the importance of political violence in assuring the future. Members of the group believed that the aesthetic challenge of Magma's music was political in nature; pianist François Cahen argued, "Unfortunately, France has become a terribly conformist country that only encourages strongly entrenched values... therefore against this attitude there is only one solution: combat."¹⁶ For Magma and many other French progressive rock groups, this combat was entirely cultural and occurred within the confines of their music alone.

While most progressive bands chose to critique the system only through musical production, a few groups instead attempted to integrate the cultural aspirations of progressive rock with more direct political forms of confrontation. More than just a cultural challenge, progressive rock could be a method of also inspiring political action. Rock concerts, such as the one at the Palais des Sports, had become highly politicized due to the authorities' concerns over large numbers of young people congregating and organizing in a potentially violent manner. Police and municipal authorities severely limited rock concerts after 1968, much to the detriment of the burgeoning progressive rock scene in France.¹⁷ Taking advantage of this confrontational attitude, several progressive rock groups, including Red Noise, Komintern, and Maajun, used their concerts and music to organize young people into political groups in a similar manner to how New Leftist groups in France, especially Maoists and Trotskyists, sought to prepare young people for the coming revolution. By offering both a cultural challenge and an overtly political one, these groups suggest that the division between the New Left and the Freak Left was not so distinct.

Founded by Patrick Vian, son of the iconoclastic chansonnier Boris Vian, Red Noise was a musical collective that brought together the music of free jazz musicians such as Albert Ayler and the sophisticated pastiche of Frank Zappa. Musically, Red Noise combined these aesthetics in order to collapse the cultural distinctions between artistic forms that riddled French culture, that is, to undermine the legitimacy of high culture. In essence, Red Noise used noise as well as political rhetoric to articulate its critique of French society. Some critics understood pop music as the best vehicle for such critiques:

In the aural climate of our time [1970], pop music explodes with the rhythms of inaccessible horizons—metallic violence and musical finesse, love, revolt, and drugs: recovered delirium. Either the simple music of *variété* [French light pop music] or the brutal message of revolution, popular music endlessly expands its audience which recognizes it as one or the other.¹⁸

It was this combination of revolutionary sound and rhetoric, this “brutal message of revolution,” that defines Red Noise’s only full-length recording, 1970’s *Sarcelles-Lochères*.

The album was named for an expansive public housing project in Eastern France, a *grand ensemble* that had been constructed according to the modernist principles advocated by the architect Le Corbusier. Part of the centralization of postwar urban planning and the need to expand public housing, Sarcelles had a large population, but by the 1960s it was well known for the problems of social isolation that led to *sarcellite*, a term coined to define the condition of boredom-induced malaise that appeared in the *grands ensembles*. This sickness was alleged to be prevalent among women who remained in a domestic role within the *grand ensemble* despite its lack of a sense of community.¹⁹ As a symbol for the failures of postwar reconstruction and resistance to the Gaullist state, Sarcelles exemplified the ossification of France, the inability of people to live in modern society without anxiety and dread, and the need for people to fight back against the technocratic state. Sarcelles had been invoked during the Events of 1968, and Red Noise again deployed it to attack French society.

The album is neatly divided into two sides: Each taking a different musical approach that mirrors the variety of protest found in Paris in May. Songs such as “Caka Slow,” “Galactic Sewer Song,” and “Á la memoire du rocker inconnu [In Memoriam of the Unknown Rocker]” employ musical forms of *détournement*, combining traditional, doo-wop-style chord progressions with improvised bursts of saxophone skronk. These shorter songs remind listeners of the playful side of 1968, of the events as a form of carnival. For example, in “Caka Slow,” juvenile euphemisms for offal—“poo-poo,” for example—target the social mannerisms of Gaullist France; prior to the song, a voice reminds the listener to “wash your hands” in the album’s brief introduction.²⁰ “Galactic Sewer Song” continues in this vein through its evocation of the towers of garbage that populated the Parisian streets during the students’ occupation of the Latin Quarter. Much of the first side of the record oscillates from the pastiche rock of “Caka Slow” to more traditional instrumental jazz-rock riffs on “Obsession Sexuelle No. 1,” which clearly reveals Zappa’s artistic influence on the group. Red Noise emphasized this connection further by putting Zappa’s face on the album’s cover. Zappa’s spirit of playfulness permeates the humor of the first side. The combination of sophisticated musical arrangements and scatological lyrics underscores the idea of cultural transgression as a primary goal of Red Noise’s work, in line with the ideals of progressive rock. Another important element of Red Noise’s challenge evident in these songs was Vian’s amateurism on guitar; while the other members of Red Noise were accomplished musicians, Vian had never played guitar before forming the group, making his efforts that much more of a cultural transgression in pop music, which had become the province of professionals. Rather than aggression, the group hinted at how the melding of serious music and bathroom humor undermined the static values of French society without the need for a political revolution.

Revolution and political engagement, however, appears at the end of the first side with “Petit précis d’instruction civique [Small Handbook of Civic Instruction].” A

short, spoken-word piece that encapsulated the spirit of the conflict in the streets of Paris, “Petit précis” invokes the battles between students and police. Presented as a manifesto against the institutions of society, the song mimics the protest chants of the streets during 1968. Red Noise’s anarchic response to the forces that confronted students in the streets of Paris—the conservative authority represented by the police, the Church, the army, and Gaullism in general—was to list all of them in the song only to have the group shout them down in response as “merde [shit].” Parginaux’s review in *Rock & Folk* magazine stressed the importance of this minute-long song that ends Side One as defining the album as a whole.²¹

“Petit précis” is followed by “Sarcelles, c’est l’avenir [Sarcelles, it’s the future],” a song that takes up the entire second side of the record. A nearly 19-minute recording presented as an aural representation of Sarcelles, “Sarcelles” is Red Noise’s soundtrack of France’s future. A noisy collage of wah-wah guitars, organs, and flutes set to a driving rhythm, “Sarcelles” unnerves due to the discordance created by the juxtaposition of signal noise with the meandering melody improvised on the flute. In the song’s mix, Vian’s distorted guitar assaults any notion of melodic or tonal structure, and is joined at the four-minute mark by a shrieking saxophone modeled on the improvisational style of free jazz players such as Ayler. At one point, the rhythm vanishes in a cacophony of percussion: bells and tambourines banging out of sync. As the song’s structure collapses during its coda, Vian’s screams illustrate the human reaction to Sarcelles. As one reviewer put it, “Red Noise [is] exploring the possibilities of electrification and the revolutionary content of pop music, the music of young whites, an angry cry coming from the *banlieues* and the grayish cities against the daily ennui and alienation.”²² The song’s aggressive tone matches the same enraged theme of “Petit précis,” with “Sarcelles” being the sound of the street battles referenced in the former. Red Noise imagined this battle now in the *banlieues* rather than the streets of Paris.

Red Noise’s musical approach illustrates the meaning of progressive rock as a method of cultural critique, as the aesthetic choices of progressive rock groups were an effort to collapse cultural distinctions. Other French groups took similar musical approaches in their fusion of rock and jazz to create futuristic music—one of the characteristics of progressive rock music is the use of technology to create imaginary futures. In the case of Red Noise, “Sarcelles” serves as a dystopian warning of the coming future, not dissimilar to the anxieties concerning technological progress that had dominated the lyrics of English progressive rock.²³ Red Noise and Magma expressed their discontent through their music, hoping to contribute to the revolutionary discourse associated with the French counterculture.

Guitars and Groupuscules

The abrasive noise of “Sarcelles” acts as a form of what Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan call the “symbolic violence” of music, in which violent sound is linked to a call to revolution and in this case, the “flics [cops]” and “l’église [church]” that occupy the lyrics of side one appear to be its obvious targets, not surprising considering the Red Noise’s alliance with leftist political groups.²⁴ However, several groups acted to cement this alliance by politicizing pop music; Vian in particular stressed

how Red Noise did not want to become mere participants in the “star system,” since success deadened the revolutionary spirit of rock and roll.²⁵ This response to the commercialization of pop music echoed the sentiments of the New Left, which feared that music would lead youths away from the revolution; one groupuscule, La Gauche prolétarienne, asserted in its literature: “Rock is the opium of youth, the drug that kills militancy, pop [music] reeks of the cops.”²⁶ But if the mission of the New Left was to “take the words [of the revolution] back to the street... to harass the fuzz [flics],” then pop music also provided an obvious weapon against the establishment.²⁷ The incident at the Palais des Sports illustrates how the authorities understood pop music, with its ability to unify and inflame youth, as a threat to the social order and, in response, authorities restricted the number of venues available for rock concerts. For example, at Le Mutualité in 1970 the venue refused to let Red Noise perform for fear of the implications of a “White Panthers” concert.²⁸

The continued difficulties in putting on concerts led Red Noise to form the Front de Libération de la Jeunesse (FLJ) in 1970 for the explicit purpose of organizing shows and bringing together young people and political groups to remind them of what united them against authorities in 1968. The FLJ hoped to make concerts into celebrations of revolutionary ideas and a method of establishing community along the lines of the Woodstock concert in 1968 or the British festivals that had lured many French youths across the Channel. The shows organized by the FLJ were often explicitly political, such as the concert at the Rue d’Ulm in April of 1971 to celebrate the centennial of the Paris Commune. Red Noise, fellow political travelers Komintern, and Gong all played in the street, in essence, doing what the Maoists had advocated. Red Noise, through the FLJ, took the self-organizational techniques of the Maoists and the Trotskyists and applied them to the performance and production of rock music.²⁹ To protest against the limitations on rock groups, the FLJ used direct action to secure public space, often provoking reactions from the police. FLJ believed its activity was part of the larger movement toward freedom that remained after 1968, but saw itself as operating in tandem with the new Communist movements.³⁰ In this case, pop groups struck a balance between the *gauchisme* of the New Left and the musical explorations of the Freak Left, bridging the two movements that developed in the French counterculture and showing that the differences that divided them were quite small.

Red Noise combined humor and violence in its music and lyrics, both in service to the continuance of the revolution, but the group did not remain together for long. By 1970 two of its founding members, Francis Lemonnier and Serge Catalano, left and formed a new group, Komintern, whose name suggests a continuity with the political mission of Red Noise’s music. Similar to Red Noise, Komintern offered protest through both its music and its participation in organizations, as the group would be central in the formation of the Force de Libération d’Intervention Pop (FLIP) in October 1970. Much like the FLJ, FLIP provided a platform from which rock groups could explicitly link their music to leftist political causes.

Komintern placed a strong emphasis on musical transgression on its sole album, *Le bal du rat mort* [*The Dance of the Dead Rat*], as the musicians opt for a mix of older styles instead of Red Noise’s dystopian, future rock. Komintern favored oboes, violins, and accordions over the electric guitar, although the latter is still present, and

arrangements that mimic the style of the medieval ballad, especially in terms of the album's melodious character. Rather than the distortion and cacophony of *Sarcelles*, *Le bal* presents a more inviting form of music that draws the listener into its sound-world. Its mélange of styles reflects another tendency in progressive rock music: the idealization of the past as a form of social critique. Progressive rock groups typically blended more traditional instruments and arrangements in an effort to articulate an idyllic, preindustrial Arcadian past. Macan notes that the prevalence of medieval imagery in progressive rock lyrics and album covers and the integration of acoustic instruments were methods to imagine a near future beyond the futile technocratic present, promising listeners a better world and a means of escape.³¹ The future, then, would be a renewal of this idyllic and lost past. The musical sophistication of *Le bal du rat mort* exemplifies how this combination of style, a pastiche of tangos, polkas, jazz, and rock often within the same song, challenged cultural boundaries. The title track moves between a lilting waltz played on an oboe in one section and a blues-based electric guitar riff in another, creating a striking juxtaposition of sound. "Hommage au maire du Tours [Song for the Mayor of Tours]" opens with a pipe organ, only to have the group perform the song's melody via flatulent mouth sounds to puncture the seriousness of the song. Much like the group's predecessor Red Noise, Komintern combines musical complexity with juvenile humor to transform the meaning of each.

Komintern's political leanings were nevertheless discernable in its lyrics. The group used traditional revolutionary songs as lyrical texts. Reacting to the presence of these texts, music critics saw *Le bal* as a broadside against "a France that has been rotting since 1789."³² The album's single "Fou, roi, pantin [Fool, king, puppet]" contains elements of Arthur Rimbaud's poetry as part of the group's antiestablishment stance concerning social and political norms, although within the dynamic of combining different artistic forms. Couched within fairground music that seemingly invites distraction, the direct language of political change is still evident. Komintern asks, "What can be done about fucking Paris?/ Your soul and your body/ Your poisons and your rags" and then opines that, "Each will have his own power."³³ In "Petite musique pour un blockhaus," the singer notes that "we are waiting for the day of deliverance," longing for the coming revolution.³⁴ The revolution never came to France in 1968 and the underlying problems remained, but Komintern's music reminded listeners that political solutions were still possible. Komintern's attempt to get Jean-Paul Sartre to produce its record suggests their affinity for his brand of revolutionary Marxism, reinforcing the relationship between the New Left and pop groups.³⁵

One of the primary avenues of advocacy was through Komintern's activities with FLIP, which sought to align the interests of the New Left and the Freak Left in a manner that revealed how each critical approach—the cultural and the political—complemented the other. As a FLIP groupuscule communiqué stated, "pop will be a vehicle of our revolt against the old world, a subversive weapon to change lives and transform the world here and now."³⁶ For its members—Komintern, Barricade, and Dagon among others—FLIP brought pop music to youth in an effort to create revolutionary masses and to undermine the "bourgeois" aspects of daily culture.³⁷ Another communiqué warned of the dangers of boredom, citing an incident in

October 1970 in which 140 concertgoers perished in a fire in St-Laurent-du-Pont. FLIP blamed bourgeois society for making leisure a commodity, leading to so many deaths. FLIP pointed to the tragedy as further proof of the need to transform the “exploitative” nature of popular culture through revolt.³⁸ Thus, Komintern (and FLIP in general) saw no difference between pop music and revolution; these things were both parts of a larger project of social change.

FLIP served as a method of ensuring the availability of performing venues, such as Maisons de la jeunesse et de la culture [MJC], which had been established in most French cities. The MJCs permitted pop groups to operate without charging excessive fees to recoup costs for overhead, but often these performances were blocked by municipal authorities unfriendly to pop music, a trend not unnoticed among French leftists.³⁹ The MJCs were arenas of conflict between groupuscules and authorities after 1968, and the intervention of FLIP reveals the tensions concerning the rights of the French public in using the centers.⁴⁰ In addition to using municipal theaters, Komintern often performed at meetings of groupuscules and for striking workers.⁴¹ In rejecting the commercial aspects of pop music, Komintern, through FLIP, hoped to transform the production of pop music in France into one that was more participatory and egalitarian, despite Komintern’s decision to release its record through a corporate label, Pathé Marconi. The centralization of the music industry in France meant that groups that wanted to reach a larger audience were forced to work with the established music labels. The band justified its choice by stressing how it was critical for its music to be heard outside of the Parisian underground.⁴² By releasing *Le bal* through a corporation, Komintern could claim to be subversive in its use of the system to propagate ideas against it, especially since a FLIP communiqué asserted that young people know that pop music is more than just a commodity.⁴³ Komintern believed that the liberation of the record industry and the opening of performance venues would be steps toward the transformation of French society.⁴⁴

Despite releasing only one record, Komintern continued to tour France and Italy and to participate in political groupuscules linked to leftist causes, such as the Front de Libération de la Rock Music, which remained optimistic about changing European society several years after May 1968.⁴⁵ However, lacking a stable touring circuit, the group could not maintain a cohesive front and eventually they would break up in 1975. Nevertheless, Komintern and FLIP revealed how the creation of music and the practice of performing were both political forces that could bring together a united front against a society that sought to control young people after 1968.

The Band as a New Society

A third group, Maajun, shared many of the aspirations of Red Noise and Komintern, especially in strengthening the connection between leftist radicals and pop music. Maajun’s 1971 album *Vivre la mort du vieux monde* [*To Live the Death of the Old World*] treads an aesthetic path between Red Noise and Komintern, moving from more blues and jazz-influenced rock songs to combinations of various forms of traditional folk. The group would be active in challenging authority through performing and recording. While it participated in FLIP, Maajun also

reveals another revolutionary aspect of French progressive rock: the rock band as communal ideal.

Unlike Komintern and Red Noise, Maajun developed out of a professional blues group, Blues Unit, which gigged around Paris in the late 1960s. An accomplished band, Blues Unit appeared to have a successful career ahead of it, similar to other French rock groups of the period such as the Variations. However, the group rejected this path after May 1968 and instead formed a new band, Maajun, to create a new type of pop band that could exist outside of the star system of French entertainment. Relocating to the *banlieues* to the east of Paris, Maajun composed the music that would make up the group's debut album, which was to be released by Vogue Records, the original home of Johnny Hallyday. The lyrical content of the album, which includes songs about the need for sexual liberation and violent overthrowing of the bourgeois order, created tension between Maajun and Vogue, leading Vogue to delay its release in 1971. *Vivre la mort* sold only 800 copies, despite the group's coverage in the French underground press.⁴⁶

Maajun composed a manifesto to accompany the album to clarify the group's mission: "Maajun: Five musicians and many other people who live, write, sing, play, and paint with and around them. The group that performs live or on recordings is but a visible emanation of a collection of efforts to change our way of life." The variety of styles integrated on *Vivre la mort* illustrates how the list of influences in the manifesto influenced the musical approach of the group. From the chaotic opener "Avertissement [Advertisement]," in which out-of-tune guitars and fifes segue into gunfire and noise, and the more straightforward blues of "Houba" to the epic "Vivre la mort du vieux monde" that occupies all of Side Two, the album, according to the manifesto, shows the path in the "long march for living the death of the old world."⁴⁷ In "La chanson du boulot [Work Song]," the group sings of how the workers (specifically peasants) will smash the system through love and dance.⁴⁸ Through its music, Maajun wanted to break barriers, "to put everyone in a similar state," and change the relationship between people.⁴⁹ But the group saw its album as only one part of a larger revolutionary process, with music as a means to an end for their political aspirations.

Maajun's members wanted to transform the practices of everyday life and thus established a commune in eastern suburbs of Paris. Communes developed in France as a way of seeking alternatives to French society and were often established in areas remote from the cities. In France, they took a variety of approaches to communal living.⁵⁰ Maajun's collective, however, appears to have been more similar to the West German political communes that formed in cities during the early 1970s.⁵¹ Maajun wanted to have deeper relationships than those resulting from merely being a musical collective, since the performance and recording of music often reinforced the passive relationship between performers and audiences and created limited relationships within the musical group. Again, while the idea to make revolutionary music brought the group together, they "did not want to have between them the relationship of 'musicos' ... refusing the existing relationships between people and to try and make true connections with each other."⁵² "The idea of a 'collective' connotes community and a collective being that in practice should lead to a common investment in our lives."⁵³ The collective experience of making music, which for

Maajun was explicitly political, served as a model for remaking society. As part of FLIP, Maajun wanted to change the contested nature of performing pop music, but the group also sought to present a new way of living of which music was only the noisiest manifestation.

These three groups—Red Noise, Komintern, and Maajun—illustrate how politics and pop music were briefly enmeshed in the early part of the 1970s and how their recorded works capitalized on this connection to vocalize protest, help organize young people, and bring together leftist groupuscules and rock bands in common cause. Despite the perception among the New Leftists of the commercial nature of pop music, these three groups were conscious of how changing the meaning and praxis of pop was a critical part of the political revolution. More than their fellow musicians, however, the members of these bands did not think the music was enough to instigate social change, and thus coupled the cultural challenge of progressive rock with the direct action of the groupuscules. The cultural changes out of May 1968 may appear obvious in hindsight, but the story of these groups reminds us that, at the time, pop was politicized in a manner that briefly brought together the New Left and Freak Left in France. This alliance between pop music and politics would continue to be negotiated after the 1970s, most evident in the collection of groups in France christened *le rock alternatif* in the 1980s. Bands such as Berurrier Noir and Les Garçons Bouchers combined the musical experimentation of progressive rock with the direct language of punk music. Moreover, these groups advocated a form of cultural anarchism that linked the transgression of progressive sound—the revolution of sound—with the advocacy of *autogestation* [self-production] and fulfilled the promise of FLIP and FLJ through the establishment of independent record labels during the 1980s. The fusion between political language and musical challenge in *rock alternatif* found more success than the progressive groups of the 1970s, but they nevertheless shared much in the way of ideological orientation. The noise, most definitely a red noise, that they made filled the space between pop music and leftist *engagé* politics.

Notes

1. Christian Victor and Julien Regoli, *20 ans de rock français* (Paris: Albin Michel/ Rock & Folk, 1979), 99; and Jean-Claude Vincent, *Seventies* (Paris: Crypto, 1996), 71.
2. Philippe Parginaux, "Revolution au Palais," *Rock & Folk* 50 (March 1971): 74–75.
3. Henry-Skoff Torgue, *La Pop Music* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975). In Anglophone scholarship, the divide between pop and rock has historically hinged upon the notion of intention, whereby pop music is interpreted as created for a marketplace and rock is created as a form of artistic inspiration. However, this type of dialectic is not evident in Francophone scholarship, which tends to view all forms of music greatly influenced by foreign aesthetics as pop music, a differing, although equally problematic, interpretation.
4. For example, the folk movement in the United States and the *tropicália* movement in Brazil both serve as examples of the conflation of pop music and politics during the 1960s. See Roy Eyerma and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the 20th Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of Brazilian Counterculture* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

5. See, for example, "Ce qu'ils pensent de la 'Révolution,'" *Noir et blanc* 1213 (June 27, 1968), in which the pop stars of the French hit parades offer their opinions on the Events of May. Tellingly, stars such as Johnny Hallyday and Sheila distanced themselves from the events.
6. Eric Drott, *Music and the Elusive Revolution: Cultural Politics and Political Culture in France, 1968–1981* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), esp. Chapter 4.
7. A prime example of this interpretation is Arthur Marwick's *The Sixties*, which sees the Events of May in the Western world as merely a point within the trajectory of cultural change that had been in motion since the late 1950s. See Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958–c.1974* (New York: Oxford, 1998), especially chapter 2; and Micheal Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).
8. Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, "Utopia and Disillusion: Shattered Hopes of the Copenhagen Counterculture," in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980*, ed. Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 334–338. For a brief discussion of the French Freak Left, see Jonathyne Briggs, "The Pot Head Pixies: Drug Utopias in the Music of Gong, 1969–1974," *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 23 (2008): 6–23.
9. Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 13; and Julian Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought*, chapter 3.
10. Nick Bromwell, *Tomorrow Never Knows: Rock and Psychedelics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
11. Bill Martin, *Listening to the Future: The Time of Progressive Rock, 1968–1978* (Chicago: Open Press, 1998); Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Kevin Holm-Hudson, ed., *Progressive Rock Reconsidered* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
12. Paul Stump, *The Music's All That Matters: a History of Progressive Rock* (London: Quartet Books, 1995).
13. Macan, *Rocking the Classics*, 76. For a brief overview of these French groups, see Dag Erik Asbjørnsen, *Scented Gardens of the Mind: Guide to the Golden Era of Progressive Rock (1968–1980)* (Wolverhampton, UK: Borderline, 2000), 147–264.
14. Iain Anderson, *This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).
15. Paul Beaud and Alfred Willener, *Musique et vie quotidienne. Essai de sociologie d'une nouvelle culture* (Paris: Mame, 1973).
16. "Magma," *Pop 2000: Le journal de la pop française* 2 (February 20, 1972): 3.
17. Jonathyne Briggs, "Anarchie en France: Hypermodernity and French Popular Music, 1958–1981" (PhD diss., Emory University, Atlanta, GA, 2006), 141–145.
18. Torgue, *La Pop Music*, 5.
19. Michael Mulvey, "The Problem That Had a Name: Desperate Housewives and Mental Malady in Parisian *Grands Ensembles*, 1962–1976" (paper presented at the Society for French Historical Studies, St. Louis, MO, March 2009).
20. Red Noise, "Caka Slow," *Sarcelles-Lochères* Future Red 1 (1970), LP.
21. Philippe Parginaux, "Disques," *Rock & Folk* 50 (March 1971): 91.
22. "Red Noise: Sarcelles-Lochères," *Actuel* 8 (May 1971): 63.
23. Macan, *Rocking the Classics*, 81.
24. Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan, *The Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 95; and Philippe Aubert, "L'agit pop," *Actuel*

- 13 (July 1970): 14. This is similar to the claim made by Charles Manson concerning the connection between the Beatles's "Helter Skelter" and the race war he imagined as imminent in 1968; see Vincent Bugliosi with Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter: The True Stories of the Manson Murders* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 327.
25. Philippe Koechlin, "Enquête sur une musique accablée de soupçons," *Rock & Folk* 48 (January 1971): 63.
26. Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Génération* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 261.
27. *Vive la Revolution: Journal de Marxiste-Léniniste-Maoïste* 6 (June 5, 1970): 2.
28. Paul Alessandrini, "Nouvelles de l'underground," *Rock & Folk* 48 (January 1971): 19. This was by no means an isolated case, as many rock concerts and festivals encountered resistance from municipal authorities during the early 1970s, leading many French musicians to choose to participate in concerts outside of France.
29. Victor and Regoli, *Vingt ans de rock français*, 99.
30. *Actuel par Actuel: Chronique d'un journal et de ses lectures, 1970–1975* (Paris: Dire/ Stock 2, 1977), 58.
31. Macan, *Rocking the Classics*, 43–44.
32. Pierre Cressant, "Disques hors étoiles," *Rock & Folk* 62 (March 1972): 84.
33. Komintern, "Fou, Roi, Pantin," *Le bal du rat mort* Pathé Marconi/ Harvest 2C 062–11.774 (1971), LP.
34. Komintern, "Petite musique pour un blockhaus," *Le Bal du rat mort*.
35. See Blancard's sleeve notes for *Le Bal du rat mort*.
36. "Free, pop et politique," *Actuel* 6 (March 1971): 12.
37. Alain Roux, "Le pop music," in *Musique et vie quotidienne*, Beaud and Willener 145.
38. "Document: Le F.L.I.P. au Lycée Buffon," reprinted in *Musique en jeu* 2 (1970): 95.
39. Jean-Pierre Lentin, "L'Eur-Rock est né" *Actuel* 12 (September 1971): 14.
40. Laurent Besse, *Les MJC: De l'été des blousons noirs à l'été des Minguettes, 1959–1981* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), 277–290.
41. See sleeve notes for *Le Bal du rat mort*.
42. Jacques Vassal, "Rock en phrance," *Rock & Folk* 78 (July 1973): 40.
43. Georges Haessig, "Une expérience de détournement, le F.L.I.P.," *Musique en jeu* 2 (1970): 93.
44. "Vrac," *Parapluie* 4 (1971): 23.
45. Jean-Pierre Lentin, "Mozik," *Actuel* 27 (January 1973): 53; and "Lettres," *Super Hebdo Pop Music* 12 (January 1973): 5.
46. Victor and Regoli, *20 ans de rock français*, 102.
47. "Maajun," *Parapluie* 2 (January–February 1971): 18.
48. Maajun, "Le chanson du boulot," *Vivre la mort du vieux monde* Vogue SLVX.545 (1971), LP.
49. Quoted in Rioux, "La musique pop," 118.
50. Jean-Pierre Bouyxou and Pierre Delannoy, *L'aventure hippie* (Paris: Plon, 1992), 134–135.
51. See Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), chapter 4, for example.
52. Jean-Pierre Lentin, "Maajun," *Actuel* 6 (1971): 16.
53. Quoted in Roux, "La Musique pop," 133.

CHAPTER 2

Mapping Tropicália

Christopher Dunn

One way to approach the extraordinary burst of creative energy in late 1960s Brazil is to map the interplay between image, sound, text, and experience in a context of rapid modernization and the dramatic expansion of mass culture. Among artists and critics, a fascination with highly commodified cultural forms such as pop music coexisted with an aversion to the culture industry. At the same time, new imperatives regarding “participation” and “experience” came to the fore as artists sought ways to engage audiences in the production of meaning. These tensions came to a head in 1968 in association with Tropicália, a short-lived, but high-impact set of events and works that would have a profound impact on Brazilian culture. Within the vast constellation of cultural forms associated with the “global 1968,” Tropicália stands out as one of the most consequential adventures in multi-disciplinary cultural production.

Any discussion of Tropicália must reference the sense of crisis that lies at the core of the extraordinary surge of invention and innovation in Brazilian artistic production in the late 1960s. The protagonists of this creative flowering became young adults in the late 1950s, a period of great optimism buttressed by the idea that artists had a central role to play in the forging of a democratic, socially just, and modern nation. The tropicalists were informed by a rich modernist avant-garde tradition in Brazil dating from the 1920s and revived in the 1950s by poets and artists identified with international constructivist currents in visual art, music, and poetry. Yet they began their professional careers around the time when Brazil’s postwar experiment in democracy was coming to an end.

A military coup in April 1964 brought to power an authoritarian regime backed by traditional landed interests, a comprador elite, international capitalist powers, and broad sectors of a conservative urban middle class. The generals who came to power followed a program of authoritarian modernization, combining technological and infrastructural development with meager levels of social investment, heavy political repression, and censorship. The ascension of a right-wing authoritarian

regime within the context of rapid modernization and urbanization produced a specific set of tensions and contradictions for left-wing artists, who were committed to the ideals of national autonomy, yet also inserted within an increasingly internationalized, media-driven world.

Tropicália is best understood not as a formal movement as such, but rather as a “moment” marked by a confluence of watershed events, productions, and happenings that took place in several artistic fields during the period 1967–1968.¹ It came closest to coalescing as an actual movement in the realm of popular music, involving a group of young musicians from the northeastern state of Bahia—Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa, Gilberto Gil, and Tom Zé—along with poets Torquato Neto and José Carlos Capinan. In the mid-1960s, the so-called *grupo baiano* migrated south, first to Rio de Janeiro and then to São Paulo, where they made contact with the concrete poets and members of the Música Nova avant-garde, most notably the composer-arranger Rogério Duprat. They also began working with a trio of young rock musicians, Arnaldo and Sérgio Baptista, and Rita Lee, who formed the core of the band Os Mutantes, which developed a highly original approach to psychedelic rock.

Unlike bossa nova, the tropicalist music cannot be defined in terms of style or form, but, rather, by a set of strategies or approaches to music characterized by various forms of “cannibalization,” including parody, pastiche, and direct quotation. Veloso has compared the tropicalist approach to music to the contemporary practice of sampling, combining “ready-mades” from a wide range of sounds, including traditional sambas and marchas, bossa nova, bolero, mambo, and rock.² The tropicalists were engaged in a sort of archeology of Brazilian song tradition while at the same time subverting reigning notions of “good taste.” They were interested, above all, in the phenomenon of “pop music” and its relation to youth culture, consumer society, and the Brazilian song tradition. Their embrace of Anglo-American rock and blunt admission of market forces in popular music disturbed fellow artists and critics of the left. The music historian José Ramos Tinhorão, for example, denounced Tropicália as “the vanguard of the 1964 regime in the realm of popular music.”³

Despite his significant reservations about the political efficacy of Tropicália, Roberto Schwarz was the first critic to observe in an essay published in 1970 that the tropicalists enacted an allegory of contemporary Brazil by exposing glaring contradictions between modernization and archaic social relations.⁴ Tropicália may be understood as a “cultural dominant,” akin to Frederic Jameson’s formulation of postmodernism in relation to late capitalism in the West.⁵ Several critics have argued that Tropicália represented the inaugural gesture of a Brazilian postmodernity brought on by the collapse of revolutionary mobilization and the consolidation of a pro-capitalist military regime allied with the United States.⁶ Leaving aside for now whether or not Tropicália was postmodern, we might simply observe that Tropicália represented, to use Jameson’s term, the “cultural logic” not of late capitalism, but rather, of authoritarian modernization. Roberto Schwarz made a similar, but slightly different observation, in calling Tropicália the “cultural logic of counter-revolution,” which suggests a link between the movement and the defeat of socialism.⁷ In my view, this did not mean that the tropicalists were allied with the regime, as Tinhorão had insinuated, but rather, that they were uniquely attuned to the stark contradictions and structural changes brought on by military rule and

its development program. Robert Stam and Ella Shohat have recently argued that Tropicália promoted “a full-throated dissonance” in Brazilian culture by critiquing the cultural conservatism of the orthodox left, refusing the discourse of cordiality and highlighting historical contradiction, engaging both low-brow popular culture as well as the international avant-garde, satirizing foundational national myths, and forging a “transtemporal and contrapuntal aesthetics.”⁸

The eruption of Tropicália coincided with an intensification of protests, led by students and other progressive sectors of civil society, labor activism and mass strikes, and, finally, the emergence of an armed urban guerilla movement. The termination of this moment was clearly demarcated—December 13, 1968—when the regime established blanket censorship, suspended habeas corpus, and dissolved congress under the fifth of a series of institutional acts, empowering the hard-liners within the regime. Veloso and Gil, the most prominent figures of tropicalist music, were arrested, imprisoned, and eventually sent into exile together with hundreds of Left-wing artists, intellectuals, and militants.

Tropicália was a remarkable moment of multidisciplinary dialogue involving music, performance, visual culture, theater, film, and literature, acutely attuned to the particular historical juncture of Brazil under authoritarian rule. At the same time, it put into play several traditions within the Brazilian avant-garde and its ongoing engagement with international movements as it referenced and drew inspiration from modernist interventions of the 1920s, mid-century constructivist movements, and an emergent pop sensibility. Andreas Huyssen’s well-known essay “Mapping the Postmodern” proposes a trajectory of cultural interventions and debates relating to art institutions and mass culture in Western Europe and the United States. In his view, the postmodern represented a continuation of, not a rupture with, a variety of projects associated with the historical avant-garde, especially Dada with its radical institutional critique of art’s role and status in society. Huyssen proposes a lineage that links several avant-garde traditions from Dada to Serialism to Pop, what he calls the “Duchamp–Cage–Warhol axis.”⁹ Despite the profound differences among these artists, they all redefined the parameters of their respective artistic fields. A similar mapping of the Brazilian avant-garde tradition will help us to understand the unique convergence of forces that produced Tropicália. Such a mapping may help us to better understand Tropicália’s relationship to the Brazilian avant-garde of the 1920s, the mid-century constructivist avant-garde, and finally to the remarkable eruption of international pop aesthetics in the late 1960s.

The Cannibalist Idea

From its inception, Tropicália was presented and received as a rearticulation of *antropofagia* (anthropophagy or cannibalism), a polemical intervention within Brazilian modernism led by Oswald de Andrade, who outlined key principles of the movement in the “Manifesto Antropófago” (Cannibalist Manifesto) of 1928. Drawing inspiration from indigenous Brazilian groups who practiced ritual cannibalism by consuming the flesh of vanquished enemies (as well as of departed loved ones), Oswald proposed the figure of the defiant “bad savage” who resisted colonial subjugation and Christianization.

Antropofagia is a complex and multivalent trope with both destructive and regenerative implications. It's possible to read it as a metaphor for violence and exploitation, what Oswald called, in a seldom cited passage of the manifesto, "the low cannibalism brought together in the sins of catechism—envy, usury, calumny, murder." In this sense, eating the other could be understood as the ultimate form of dominating and debasing one's enemy to gain symbolic and physical strength. This was the primary significance of *antropofagia* employed by Oswald's friend and collaborator, Mário de Andrade, in his classic text *Macunaíma* (1928), a fantastic story drawing heavily on indigenous myths and Brazilian folklore. Macunaíma is a "hero with no character" who leaves his home in the Amazon in a quest to recover the *muiraquitã*, a sacred amulet that symbolizes Brazil's national essence as a mixed-raced tropical civilization. His nemesis, Venceslau Pietro Pietra, is simultaneously presented as an avaricious magnate from São Paulo and as Piamã, the monstrous "eater of men" in indigenous lore. Although the trickster hero outwits Venceslau, he is ultimately devoured by a lake siren after returning to the jungle with the amulet. In 1969, *Macunaíma* was adapted to cinema by Joaquin Pedro de Andrade who set the story in the context of modern São Paulo. Ismail Xavier notes how the film uses the metaphor of cannibalism to reveal the "modern barbarism" of the urban bourgeoisie characterized by "grotesque consumerism."¹⁰ The final scene pictures the hero as he is submerged in a river and devoured by a seductive siren as the national anthem plays in the background as if to suggest that Brazil violently devours its citizens.¹¹

This dystopian vision of "low cannibalism" as destructive consumption was also dramatized in *O rei da vela* [The Candle King], a play written by Oswald de Andrade in 1933 after he had renounced his youthful aesthetic vanguardism, embraced Marxism, and joined the Brazilian Communist Party.¹² The play is set in São Paulo following the worldwide economic crisis of 1929 and the subsequent collapse of the coffee market, which ruined the fortunes of many elite families with landed interests. Oswald's play revolves around the "candle king," a heartless loan shark who takes advantage of the financial crisis to exploit the misfortune of others. He runs a side business selling candles, a polyvalent object representing death (when used in funeral rites), underdevelopment (in lieu of electric lights), and perhaps most significantly, a phallus used to "screw over" competitors. The candle king himself is ultimately outmaneuvered by his protégé who takes his place in the business. The Brazilians devour each other in a crude competition for power, but are ultimately "devoured" by Mr. Jones, the figure of American imperialism.¹³ The play was censored by the authoritarian regime of Getúlio Vargas when it was first published in 1937 and had been all but forgotten by the time it was first staged in 1967 by Teatro Oficina, a São Paulo-based theater company under the direction of Zé Celso Martinez Corrêa. Oficina employed Brechtian distancing techniques as well as Artaudian notions of total theater involving direct (and often uncomfortable) interactions between the actors and the audience. Although *antropofagia* is not explicitly treated in the script, it functions implicitly as a highly sexualized trope for the consumption of others. In colloquial speech, "to eat" is commonly used to signify sexual penetration of another person. Oficina's staging of *O rei da vela* would be later recognized as one of the foundational moments of the tropicalist phenomenon in the way that it revived the critical spirit of Oswaldian *antropofagia* in Brazilian theater.

The trope of *antropofagia* was also mobilized by Hélio Oiticica, the visionary artist whose 1967 installation, *Tropicália*, provided the namesake for the entire phenomenon. In explaining this work, Oiticica approached *antropofagia* as a polyvalent metaphor with both negative and affirmative uses. Calling it “the most anthropophagic work in Brazilian art,” Oiticica deployed the metaphor as a way to address the problem of the image—the excess of mass-mediated images in modern society and its impact on contemporary artistic trends, most notably pop art. The work, which will be described in greater detail below, featured a spiraling structure with permanently functioning television set at the end of the path: “It is the image which then devours the participant, because it is more active than his sensorial activity.”¹⁴ In this way, he invokes *antropofagia* as a way to reference the domination of other sorts of sensorial and kinetic experiences by mass-mediated visual stimulus. In this instance, Oiticica uses *antropofagia* to reference modern processes and mechanisms of domination and obliteration in Brazilian society.

In the same essay, however, Oiticica uses *antropofagia* affirmatively to champion the role of nonwhite populations in the forging of modern Brazilian culture: “For the creation of a true Brazilian culture, distinctive and strong, expressive at least, this accursed European and (US) American influence will have to be absorbed anthropophagically, by the Black and Indian of our land” In this passage, Oiticica asserts a variation on what would become the dominant mode of interpreting *antropofagia* as an insurgent, anticolonialist gesture by subjugated, subaltern, or otherwise marginalized peoples. From this perspective, ritual cannibalism can be understood affirmatively as a form of resistance against Portuguese colonialism, enslavement, and the imposition of Catholic morality founded on patriarchal rule, a civilizational model that inevitably led to the “low cannibalism” of usury and exploitation. Oswald’s 1928 manifesto claims the superiority of precolonial indigenous civilization, imagined as a utopian matriarchy, over the European colonial enterprise: “We want the Carib Revolution. Greater than the French Revolution. The unification of all productive revolts for the progress of humanity. Without us, Europe wouldn’t even have its meager declaration of the rights of man.”¹⁵ Oswald makes oblique reference to the idea that Enlightenment ideas of natural rights were inspired in part by Montaigne’s idealized notion of the “noble savage” in commune with nature and with his community. Oswaldian *antropofagia* subverted colonial-era discourses that stigmatized cannibalism and reinforced the civilization/barbarism binary. Noted for its radical intertextuality, often infused with a parodic charge, Oswald’s manifesto sought to subvert, or at least relativize, the legacy of colonialism, Christianity, and Enlightenment philosophy, while suggesting ways to engage critically and playfully with Western European and North American cultural production.

The “Cannibalist Manifesto” suggests that there was something salvageable and valuable in European culture that could be appropriated and “digested” to serve the needs of modernist intellectuals in search of cultural autonomy. In devouring the foreign other, the cannibal would acquire his spiritual (and cultural) powers, which implies a measure of admiration and desire, as suggested in this line from the manifesto: “Absorption of the sacred enemy. To transform him into a totem.” His assertion of *antropofagia* as productive consumption, in which a dominant culture could be appropriated and reconfigured for local purposes would have been alien to

the cosmic and cultural universe of colonial-era Indians who practiced ritual cannibalism, but it has served as a seductive metaphor for modern Brazilian artists who seek to create works that are recognizably Brazilian, and also synchronized with the *dernier cri* of Europe and the United States.

The concrete poets of São Paulo were instrumental in canonizing this now dominant interpretation of *antropofagia* as consumptive production, which dovetailed with their own project to articulate a mid-century constructivist avant-garde from the periphery. For the concrete poets, Oswaldian cannibalism pointed a way through the ongoing debate around nationalism and cosmopolitanism in Brazilian culture. Concrete poetry was resolutely cosmopolitan and internationalist yet was presented as a unique achievement of Brazilian modernity. In his early writings about popular music in the 1960s, Augusto de Campos wrote:

The expansion of international movements usually moves from the more developed countries to the less developed, which means that the latter are often receivers of imported culture. But the process can be reverted when the lesser developed countries are able to devour cannibalistically, as Oswald would say, the superior technology of the highly developed countries and give back new finished products, seasoned with their unique and different cultures.¹⁶

In his formulation, Oswaldian *antropofagia* was uniquely suited to a developmentalist project, parallel to postwar import-substitution policies that sought to modernize Brazil's industrial infrastructure using imported technology in order to make finished products for export.

Campos, already an established figure in the Brazilian avant-garde, took an early interest in the nascent *grupo baiano* after reading his intervention in a published debate about the state of Brazilian popular music in which Caetano Veloso declared his allegiance to the so-called *linha evolutiva* [evolutionary line]—a tradition of invention that placed Brazilian music in perpetual dialogue with international aesthetic innovations. For both Campos and Veloso, bossa nova was the supreme manifestation of this dialectic. In a 1968 interview to Augusto de Campos, Veloso endorsed the reading of *antropofagia* as a metaphor of consumption and make-it-new production, affirming that “tropicalism is a neo-anthropophagism.”¹⁷ Many years later, Veloso would reaffirm this idea, noting in particular the importance of Oswaldian cannibalism in articulating a project that transcended narrow forms of cultural nationalism: “The idea of cultural cannibalism fit us tropicalists like a glove. We were ‘eating’ the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix. Our arguments against the defensive attitude of the nationalists found here a succinct and exhaustive formulation.”¹⁸ Yet *antropofagia* also suggests that cosmopolitanism and nationalism are inextricably intertwined, not mutually exclusive, in the way that it is predicated on the critical devouring of the foreign other in order to produce something different.

“General Constructive Will”

Oiticica first showed “Tropicália” at the New Objectivity exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro in 1967. For the exhibit catalogue he penned a

manifesto-like essay that attempted to outline a theory and practice of a situated avant-garde in Brazil. Oiticica argued that the avant-garde was a “far reaching cultural issue” that demanded “collective solutions,” not merely the concern of a small elite of artists and intellectuals.¹⁹ He outlined a series of general tendencies and dispositions that characterized the Brazilian avant-garde, beginning with what he called the “general constructive will” (*vontade construtiva geral*)—an abiding commitment to constructivist projects in visual arts, poetry, and architecture in modern Brazil. Other principles included the negation of painting, spectator participation, engagement with social, political, and ethical problems, collective projects, and finally, the revival of “anti-art” along the lines first proposed by Duchamp in the early twentieth century. Oiticica conceived avant-garde practice as a critique of the institutional and social contexts for the production of a given object that is recognized, valued, and consumed as art. For him, the role of the artist was not to produce “works” for contemplation, but rather to insinuate or “propose” new forms of behavior.

Oiticica’s “Tropicália” (Figure 2.1) must be understood vis-à-vis the postwar constructivist project in Brazil, which emerged in opposition to modernist figurative painting that was concerned foremost with representing “Brazilianness.” *Arte concreta* of this period privileged geometric abstraction devoid of all external representation or symbolism. There was a parallel challenge in the realm of art music, as young composers led by German emigré Hans Joachim Koellrueter rejected the nationalist modernism of Villa-Lobos and his followers and embraced the 12-tone technique of Schoenberg and later the serial compositions of John Cage. The most influential and sustained concretist project developed in the field of poetry around the group composed of Augusto and Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari, who eliminated verse in their efforts to produce functional “objects-words” and “poem-products” informed by techniques of contemporary graphic design and mass communication.



Figure 2.1 Hélio Oiticica, *Tropicália*, 1967. Courtesy of Projeto Hélio Oiticica

In the late 1950s, a neo-concretist avant-garde formed in Rio de Janeiro around the poet-critic Ferreira Gullar and included artists Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Willys de Castro, and Lygia Pape among others. While still working with a language of abstraction, the neo-concretists sought to reincorporate elements of emotion and affect that assigned primacy to the sensorial experience of the spectator who is called upon to participate actively in the production of meaning. If the concretists replaced the word *create*, linked to a romantic sensibility, with the word *invent*, associated with science and technology, the neo-concretists in turn replaced *invent* with the term *propose* to describe their highly speculative and contingent artistic practice. As Lygia Clark would later declare in a mini-manifesto from 1968: “We are the proposers: we buried the work of art as such and call out to you so that thought may live through your action.”²⁰

Clark and Oiticica were both interested in transcending the limitations of pictorial space produced by the frame and releasing painting into space. Oiticica saw this line of work as both an extension of and break with Mondrian’s two-dimensional experiments with color and space. This liberation of color and form into space opened up a key element in his subsequent work: the participation of the viewer. Clark found her own way of addressing this issue with her *Bichos*, a series of sculptures made of metal planes articulated by hinges to be manipulated by the spectator-turned-participant. In contrast to orthodox concretism, neo-concretism maintained a detached attitude in relation to the modernizing developmentalist project. According to Ronaldo Brito, neo-concretism “was practically apolitical, it was maintained in a closed terrain, it was timid and mistrusting of the participation of art in industrial production.”²¹ Yet neo-concretism insinuated an implicit project for an alternative politics based on the idea of subjective participation through sensorial experience.

The neo-concretist movement effectively ended in 1961. The movement’s principal theorist, Ferreira Gullar, abandoned the avant-garde project altogether and joined the CPC, a cultural movement that proposed direct communication with the masses based on discursive clarity and social protest. He would later expand his critique of the paulista concretists by questioning the very relevance of vanguardist practice in Brazil.²² The artists and theorists of the CPC were also committed to “participation” in artistic practice, but for them *arte participante* entailed agit-prop events, political consciousness-raising, and direct communication with the people.

Following the dissolution of the neo-concretist group, Oiticica and Clark further radicalized the neo-concretist project in developing their own approaches to the idea of “participation.” The participative turn in Oiticica’s work came about in 1964, when he accepted an invitation from two other artists, Jackson Ribeiro and Amílcar de Castro, to visit the Morro da Mangueira, one of Rio’s oldest favelas and home to one its most acclaimed samba schools. Oiticica’s new work came in the form of *parangolés*, a series of multilayered capes of different colors, forms, and sizes, some with poetic inscriptions like “Incorporo a revolta” [I embody Revolt] and “Da adversidade vivemos” [We live by adversity]. Oiticica conceived the *parangolés* in relation to his earlier neo-concretist explorations of structure-color in space, but situated them within a new paradigm described in terms of *estrutura ambiental* (environmental structure) centered on the *participador-obra* (participant-work). In his words: “The work requires direct corporal participation; in addition to covering

the body, it demands that the body moves and ultimately dances.”²³ He would adopt the term *anti-arte ambiental* (environmental anti-art), first proposed by art critic Mário Pedrosa, to denote the type of institutional critique that was implicit in the *parangolé* experiments. British critic Guy Brett has observed that Oiticica is situated somewhere between the Dadaist projects of Duchamp and the constructivist inclinations of Mondrian.²⁴

Oiticica's *Tropicália* inaugurated a new phase in his environmental and participative work. Conceived and constructed for the 1967 New Objectivity exhibit, *Tropicália* was a total environment, or *ambiente*, consisting of two simple structures with cloth siding called *penetráveis* (“penetrables”) surrounded by tropical flora, dirt paths, and live parrots displayed in cages. The two *penetráveis* evoked what he called the “organic architecture” of the favelas, although they were obviously not designed as faithful replicas of shanties, which were typically made of wooden planks or even bricks and mortar. Despite its obvious references to picturesque favelas, the work defied familiar notions of a bucolic, premodern Brazil. The smaller of the two structures, for example, is inscribed with the words “Pureza é um mito” (Purity is a myth), a reference to Brazil's hybrid, syncretic culture. The larger penetrable is a maze-like structure that leads the participant through a dark passage to a functioning television set, thereby suggesting the presence of then novel technologies of mass communication in the most marginalized urban communities. The structures of *Tropicália* stand in implicit contrast to the high modernist monuments of Brasília, the futuristic planned capital city inaugurated in 1960. *Tropicália* was, as Carlos Basualdo has suggested, Brasília's “mythic double” that revealed the other side of conservative modernization, in which abject poverty coexisted with artifacts of technological development.²⁵

Although not directly inspired by Oiticica's installation, Caetano Veloso subsequently composed a song, later given the title “Tropicália,” which became the song-manifesto of the movement. “Tropicália” was the opening track of Veloso's first solo album, released in 1968. The lyrics compose a montage of surreal images, musical and literary citations, and references to popular culture from various places and temporalities. Veloso's song references Brasília even more explicitly than in Oiticica's *Tropicália* by alluding to the planned city's recent history—from utopian monument to high modernist architecture to the bureaucratic center of authoritarian power.²⁶ In Veloso's song, Brasília rises over the central high plains as a monument to the contradictions and failures of Brazilian modernity. Once a symbol of future promise, Brasília is rendered as a dismal allegory of ruin and misery. The end of the first stanza—“viva a bossa-sa-sa-sa/ viva *palhoça-ça-ça*” sets up a binary tension that persists throughout the song—bossa (nova), the urbane popular music associated with modernity and development, rhymes with *palhoça*, the mud huts that housed millions of rural poor.

If the first verse provides a basic structure that juxtaposes modernity and abject poverty, the final verse refers in an ironic fashion to the field of Brazilian popular music itself: Elis Regina's popular TV program “Fino da Bossa” [The Best of Bossa], Roberto Carlos's hit song “Que tudo mais vá pro inferno” [Let all else go to hell] (and his line of menswear), and to Chico Buarque's “A Banda” [The band]. It ends with an exultant homage to samba stylist and Hollywood icon Carmen Miranda: “Viva Carmen Miranda-da-da-da.” The final line locates Tropicália within a

broader history of avant-garde art, specifically Dada, which more than any other avant-garde movement questioned the status of the “art object” as such and the institutional structures that sustained it.

Tropicalist Pop

In other ways, the final stanza of Veloso’s “Tropicália” is more attuned to a pop aesthetic, not just in the sense that it is a pop song made for mass distribution, but also in the way that it forms a collage-like inventory of desacralized objects and icons of mass culture. Veloso has noted that, during the period he was formulating tropicalist songs, he found inspiration at the 1967 Biennial in São Paulo, which featured the work of US and British pop artists: “I was impressed because it confirmed a trend we were exploring in tropicalism: that is, to take an object—a vulgar, even a culturally repulsive object—and remove it from its context, displace it.”²⁷ Veloso would explain that citing Carmen Miranda at the end of the song was akin to Andy Warhol painting a Campbell soup can, although Miranda was a much more loaded cultural reference, associated at the time with pre-bossa nova samba, a certain notion of kitsch or bad taste, and exploitation by the North American culture industry.

At the core of Tropicália as a movement is a productive tension between the constructivist and pop aesthetics. Oiticica had asserted that his work *Tropicália* was conceived as a response and critique of an emergent “pop language” that he could perceive among his peers.²⁸ The mid-1960s saw the emergence of a new figurativist movement influenced by American Pop Art, but typically more engaged with political and social critique.²⁹ Whereas the constructivism of Oiticica and Clark sought to overcome the image and privilege sensorial, participative experiences, Brazilian *neo-figuração* reveled in banal images of everyday life, often with reference to the mass media, especially newspapers and TV. This tendency within Tropicália, which can be seen in the paintings and installations by artists such as Rubens Gerchman, Nelson Lerner, and Cláudio Tozzi, the graphic design of Rogério Duarte, the carnivalesque theater of Teatro Oficina, and compositions by Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, and Tom Zé that embraced a popular aesthetics of kitsch or “mau gosto” [bad taste].

An example of pop-kitsch tropicalism is the song “Lindonéia” by Caetano Veloso, recorded by Nara Leão for the concept album *Tropicália, ou Panis et Circensis* (1968). Unlike “Tropicália,” composed without the knowledge of Oiticica’s work, Veloso’s “Lindonéia” was directly inspired by Gerchman’s 1966 painting, *Lindonéia, a Gioconda dos Subúrbios* (1966). Gerchman’s *Lindonéia* is a flat, two-dimensional portrait, not unlike a mug shot printed in the crime pages, of a young woman with a black eye and swollen lip, apparently the victim of domestic violence. Veloso’s “Lindonéia” was set to a bolero, a Cuban melodramatic genre popular among the working and lower-middle classes that was considered outdated and lowbrow after the emergence of bossa nova in the late 1950s. Veloso imagines the story of a solitary working-class woman from the suburban periphery of Rio who gets lost in the world of mass media: “*Lindonéia desaparecida nas paradas do sucesso*” (“Lindonéia has disappeared in the hit parade.”)

By the summer of 1968, when the tropicalist phenomenon was first described in the press and marketed as a distinct “movement” and style, it was precisely this notion of “tropical kitsch” that was referenced, mostly in ironic fashion.³⁰ Journalist and composer Nelson Motta launched a “tropicalist crusade” in the press in which he defined the movement as one that “accepts everything that tropical life has to offer—without prejudices on the aesthetic level, without hesitations about bad taste and kitsch.”³¹ Motta proposed a party to launch the movement, described its sartorial style, and discussed its artistic vision, which basically involved the revival of dated “lowbrow” popular music and art from the previous generation. Perhaps most interesting is Motta’s description of a “tropicalist philosophy,” which recycled, with obvious irony and distance, the reactionary ideology of the urban middle class—the same middle class that took to the streets in 1964 in support of the military coup.

Oiticica was deeply ambivalent about the popularization and popification of Tropicália, arguing that “there are elements that cannot be consumed by bourgeois voracity: the direct life element (*elemento vivencial direto*), which goes beyond the problem of the image.”³² Yet he also admired the work of Veloso, who by early 1968 was, along with Gilberto Gil, the most closely identified with tropicalist pop. Writing to British critic Guy Brett, Oiticica noted that he “had already felt many affinities with him: his music is the most important development in Brazilian popular song; it is an absorption of all kinds of rhythms, even of Beatlelike ones, but it is authentically a Brazilian cultural fact, what our poet Oswald de Andrade called anthropophagic.”³³ In a subsequent essay, Oiticica heralded the entire Bahian group, the cohort of tropicalist musicians who he positioned as avant-garde artists compatible with his own project:

The Bahians, always extremely intelligent, fostered the most extensive critique of our popular music, including the attempt to demystify “good taste” as a criteria of judgment in music (...), the reevaluation of this criteria (...), the general absorption of all types of musical genres from here and abroad, etc. But all of this was accomplished on a profound structural level and soon the need emerged, initially within the group, of what I will call “environmental manifestation.”³⁴

Oiticica was especially enthralled with the live performances of the tropicalists, which often featured outlandish costumes inspired by countercultural styles, electric guitars, and, in some cases, contentious exchanges with the audience, which sometimes became impromptu happenings. Although deeply infused with a pop sensibility oriented toward spectacle and consumption, Oiticica interpreted tropicalist musical happenings within a constructivist framework as an *ambiente*, or total, environment demanding audience participation. In 1970, Oiticica created an *ambiente* for a series of live performances by Gal Costa at a local club in Rio de Janeiro.³⁵

Lygia Clark, for her part, was adamant about distinguishing herself from the tropicalists, noting that the neo-concretists had never cultivated an audience outside of a small group of artists and critics.³⁶ While in exile in London, Caetano Veloso traveled to Paris where he visited Clark, who had been living there since 1964. In an interview given to Suely Rolnik, Veloso remembers that Clark improvised a simple installation in her living room for her guests. She laid out a blanket on the floor, as

if to prepare an indoor picnic. As a centerpiece, she placed a Coca-Cola bottle with a single plastic rose, declaring that it paid homage to the tropicalists:

I am offering you this romantic homage in order to receive you, because a plastic rose in a Coca-Cola bottle is like Pop Art that's romantic, like the things you tropicalists do, even though they are very powerful and interesting. I don't identify at all with that sort of thing because I am classical, and am only interested in classical things, that is, timeless things, because everything romantic depends on information from a certain period.³⁷

For Clark, the tropicalists were more akin to pop art with its focus on contemporary life, mass media, and consumer culture, as suggested by her gift of a plastic rose in a Coca-Cola bottle. *Tropicália* was, in this sense, an immanent critique that accounted for historical context and ideological underpinnings of any object or phenomenon. Clark, for her part, conceived her work as transcendent and universal. In contrast with the tropicalists (and even with Oiticica), there was very little in her work that explicitly referenced Brazilian culture.

Soon after his visit, Veloso paid homage to Lygia Clark with the song, "If you hold a stone," featured on his first of two albums recorded in London. The song made reference to Clark's *Pedra e Ar* [Stone and Air] (1966), which was part of a larger project she called *Nostalgia do Corpo* [Nostalgia for the Body] that explored the therapeutic potential of her sensorial objects. *Pedra e Ar* consisted of a sealed plastic bag filled with air with a stone placed precariously on top. The participant manipulates the subtle movement of air within the bag, causing the stone to rise and fall, bringing to mind the mechanics of breathing. For Veloso, the sensorial experience of feeling the weight of a stone was both comforting and enlightening, as suggested in his lyrics sung in a mixture of English and Portuguese.

In the second stanza, following each of the pentasyllabic lines, he introduces a well-known repeating response from "Marinheiro Só," a traditional Bahian samba about a solitary mariner from Bahia who is far from home. In the third stanza, the English lyrics drop out completely as he improvises on the traditional samba, ending with a clear reference to his condition as an exile: "E cadê as coisas do meu país?" ("And where are the things from my country?") In Veloso's song, the therapeutic vocation of Clark's work, oriented toward "nostalgia for the body," is displaced by a longing for Bahia and, by extension, Brazil. He renders a subtly politicized, "romantic" reading of *Pedra e Ar*, placing it within the realm of history.

Permanence of Tradition

The tropicalists also set into dialogue the two most important avant-garde movements of modern Brazil—*antropofagia* and *concretismo*—with an international language of pop, thereby inaugurating the Brazilian postmodern. Following Huyssen's mapping of the postmodern, we might propose an "Oswald–Augusto–Hélio–Caetano axis" that locates *Tropicália* within a longer arc of avant-garde aesthetic practice in Brazil. There are, of course, obvious pitfalls in using this kind of shorthand, which traces a now canonical reading of *Tropicália*, as it reduces a complex multifaceted movement

to a simple lineage. For example, such an axis fails to account for the unique vision of Tom Zé, who has explicitly disavowed Tropicália's debt to Oswaldian *antropofagia*, instead emphasizing its relation to the popular culture of the rural northeast, the poetic legacy of Provençal troubadours, and the Mozarab expressive culture of medieval Iberia.³⁸ Tom Zé's reading of Tropicália and its key points of reference remind us of the movement's heterogeneity, even within the sphere of popular music.

In both readings of Tropicália, however, there is a clear appeal to what Silviano Santiago called the "permanence of tradition," despite the spectacle of rupture and revolt.³⁹ The notion of tradition is implicit in Oswald's *antropofagia*, at once at odds with and indebted to Romantic Indianism of the nineteenth century. It's present in Zé Celso's revival of Oswaldian *antropofagia* in creating his carnivalesque guerilla theater for the Brazilian stage. It's present in Veloso's notion of a *linha evolutiva* in Brazilian music, which traces the long dialectic between musical forms perceived as "native" and "foreign." Even avid defenders of avant-garde rupture, such as the concrete poets, theorized their own work (as well as Tropicália) in relation to a longer tradition of poetic invention. Tropicália was unique in making explicit these connections with songs and performances that formed a multitemporal palimpsest of historical references, genres, and styles. The heterogeneous quality of these works was central to the tropicalist critique, which exposed the stark contradictions of Brazilian society, exacerbated by authoritarian rule, and revealed the intimate connections between underdevelopment and modernization.

Notes

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CHAPTER 3

Magical Mystery Tours: Godard and Antonioni in America

David Fresko

Montage and the Space of American Politics

Cultural and political turmoil in the United States during the late 1960s attracted the attention of European art filmmakers. Most notably, Jean-Luc Godard and Michelangelo Antonioni, independent of one another, traveled across the United States in order to film a society perceived to be on the verge of major change. Between 1967 and 1969, Antonioni produced *Zabriskie Point* (1970), his notorious critical and commercial disaster depicting romance in the context of post-1968 American countercultural and political dissent. Godard toured the United States twice in 1968: first to meet with students and young filmmakers while publicizing *La Chinoise* (1967), which Leacock-Pennebaker, Inc. were distributing on college campuses across the country, and then to join forces with his Direct Cinema distributors to produce the aborted *1 A.M./One American Movie* (1968), a film designed to depict social change wrought by the black liberation, antiwar, and student movements. Godard further took inspiration from these travels when producing *One Plus One* (1968) (also known as *Sympathy for the Devil* after the producer's re-titling), which juxtaposed the Rolling Stones rehearsing "Sympathy for the Devil" with various forms of political theater. The heights of New Left politicking and countercultural activity thus came together under the watchful eyes of two distinctly European sensibilities whose outputs had already made them stars within American cinema circles. Their presence, however, along the peripheries of "the Movement" engendered suspicion, distrust, and ambivalence about their abilities to render the realities of a coming American Revolution on screen.¹

Though Antonioni and Godard pursued their contrasting projects with different resources, both found themselves intrigued by the possibility of producing films in and about the United States with domestic resources, despite shared perceptions

of the country as a site of capitalist inequity, vulgar materialism, and imperialist intolerance. Fascination and revulsion form the poles of an ambivalent, unresolved contradiction underlining these differing projects' infamously beleaguered productions and their ensuing critical fallout. Drawn from and rooted in the apparent actuality of contemporary American society, the history of these troubled productions and the resulting films function as textual remainders—or allegories, to follow David E. James—of not only the material, political, and ideological obstacles faced by both at each stage of creation, but also of a more general problem of translation and representation between cinema and politics.²

Given its analytical properties and constructive qualities, montage emerged as the tool for negotiating these representational difficulties. In particular, the rending of image from sound and the resulting emphasis on discontinuity as a representational strategy produced increasingly opaque and abstract visions of social unrest that centered on questions of sociopolitical subjectivity for both historical actors and cinema spectators, and the omnipresent violence, metaphorical or actual, Antonioni and Godard encountered. Such violence, their films suggest, was woven in the very landscape of America's material and spatial topography. The equivocal endorsement of violence in both Antonioni and Godard's projects, and the tearing apart their montage enacted upon social and spatial reality, left stateside viewers perplexed and angered. And yet, as in Godard's case especially, such montage revealed the materiality of mediation in order to prompt the spectator's increased participation in the film's unfolding and set the stage for the possibility of radical spectatorship concomitant with a new radical imaginary.

Despite their shared interests in the relationship between violence and radical social change and the qualities stateside space would hold for cinematic representation, the montage methods devised by Antonioni and Godard differed dramatically. Whereas Antonioni sought to create positive visions of social change, Godard's radicality emerged from a desire to fundamentally reshape, if not "destroy," the lineaments of cinematic syntax and thus transform the spectator's rapport with the screen. On the one hand, Antonioni's montage generates *representations* of stateside capitalism's violent irrationality through the cacophonous accumulation of images that emphasize the color, speed, and scale of America's topography. In so doing, it cinematically visualizes radical social change by drawing on Herbert Marcuse's emancipatory promotion of "the great refusal" and "negative thinking." On the other hand, Godard's montage dismantles the sociopolitical and cognitive passivity underlining conventional cinematic signification in order to refashion it through the elemental recombination of its component parts, images and sounds, according to the method he christened *one plus one*. This generates less the representation of a particular political position than *presents* viewers with an array of images and sounds to critique, thereby building semiotic indeterminacy into the very warp and weft of a film's unfolding, transforming unidirectional signification into a participatory, dialogical relay.

***Zabriskie Point*: Antonioni's "Great Refusal"**

In *Zabriskie Point*, Mark (Mark Frechette), a student uncertain of his commitment to the Movement, witnesses a campus confrontation between black radicals and the

police. Mistakenly believing he has murdered an officer of the law, Mark hijacks a plane and flees to the desert. Meanwhile, Lee Allen (Rod Taylor), manager of the urban planning outfit Sunny Dunes Real Estate, attempts to woo potential investors into building luxury condos in Los Angeles's neighboring desert. Daria (Daria Halprin), his putative secretary (and possible lover), leaves the city to rendezvous with Allen at his desert retreat. On the way, she meets Mark, and the two participate in a wild desert love-in. Despite her protests, Mark returns the plane and, upon landing in Los Angeles, is shot by the police. Daria hears this news over the radio as she arrives at Allen's mansion, where he continues his real estate negotiations. After touring the house, she apocalyptically envisions its explosive destruction. Antonioni extends his montage of devastation to artfully composed visions of material wealth exploding in an orgy of violence. The images are coded, however, as Daria's fantasy; the house remains, the negotiations continue, and Daria drives off into the sunset.

The legendary obstacles encountered by *Zabriskie Point* came from both the Establishment and the counterculture, despite Antonioni's attempts to sow solidarity with his young subjects. The latter were ready for Antonioni. His *Blow-Up*'s (1966) hip depiction of "Swinging London" and affectation of alienated ennui drew youths in droves, generated tremendous profits for MGM, and solidified the Italian auteur's critical and commercial status as one of the foremost chroniclers of alternative lifestyles. *Blow-Up*, along with his *Red Desert* (1964), emerged as staples of the alternative exhibition circuit, while underground newspaper critics drew links between Antonioni's oeuvre and the counterculture. The *Berkeley Barb*'s Gordon Poole, for example, likened Antonioni's interests to those shared by Berkeley hippies: "Like hippies, Antonioni is concerned with problems of perception, with reality and counterfeits of reality. Like hippies, he operates, as an artist, with the contextual reality of what is still thought of by many as the 'bourgeoisie,' where alienation [*sic*] presents itself apparently more as a psychological than an economic state." Both, suggested Poole, shared a fascination with consciousness in the face of sociocultural alienation and operated within the gap between countercultural artistry and a "left" critique of "neo-capitalist society."³

To capitalize on the success that Antonioni's films achieved beyond the art cinema circuit, MGM paid for the filmmaker to tour the country—from Los Angeles, Death Valley, Las Vegas, and San Francisco to Dallas, Chicago, Nashville, and New York.⁴ That Antonioni represented MGM, however, a hallmark of the old Hollywood, engendered mistrust from antiestablishment groups with whom he interacted, including Students for a Democratic Society, the Black Panthers, the Berkeley Free Church, and protesters outside Chicago's Democratic National Convention.⁵ "You know, when I went around looking for young people and trying to see what was happening here, they were very suspicious of me. They heard MGM and they thought 'sellout,'" he told the *New York Times*. Yet Antonioni situated his act of "radical" filmmaking within a lineage of pragmatic realpolitik and coalition building, noting, "Mao once made an alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, Castro would have taken money from anyone to survive in the mountains, and look at the deals between Ho Chi Minh and the French! Money—why can't I work with MGM if it helps me to do what I want to do?"⁶ Invocations of the revolutionary left inspired suspicions of anti-Americanism from the right. Reactionary uproar against the

film functioned as part of a general attempt to stem domestic protest, and included harassment from local and federal law enforcement as well as a mutinous American crew disdainful of Antonioni and his Italian collaborators.⁷

In *Zabriskie Point*, Antonioni's montage produces a Marcusean vision of social transformation that critiques the destructive penetration of Los Angeles's urban topography, coded as a city of signs devoid of meaning, into its neighboring desert. It depicts the metaphorical violence generated by a materialist, irrational, and "one-dimensional society," to which the screenplay's references to Marcuse attest. On the one hand, Antonioni's montage generates an image of Los Angeles as an urban wasteland whose omnipresent and insignificant billboards violently bombard Mark, and by extension the spectator, as he drives through the city. By presenting the city as a signed site of disconnected spaces, *Zabriskie Point* strips itself of traditional causal connections, and denudes its images of fixed signification in order to produce meaning through conflictual juxtaposition of images and sounds. On the other hand, its representation of urban sprawl into Death Valley complicates a traditional city/country binary by depicting this divide as porous rather than absolute. Furthermore, Daria's explosive vision at the film's end treats reality and fantasy as coequal terms in the production of a radical imaginary. Such a vision functions not simply as a pillory of American materialism, but also as a paean to the poetics of Marcusean "negative thinking," a form of emancipatory consciousness based on the total rejection of normative social values and relations.⁸

Driving through Los Angeles provides audiences with a depiction of the city as a dystopian site of plastic signification. Antonioni contrasts painted iconography of mythic American ideology in dilapidated urban waste spaces with a skyline of signs that double as a Simmelian barrage assaulting the viewer. A reductive division between two representational systems—painting and cinematography—allows the filmmakers to mark the street as "real" and painted representations extolling the virtues of agrarian labor and the train's consummation of Manifest Destiny as ideological obfuscations divorced from said "reality." This is not to suggest that Antonioni valorizes the street over myth. Though the street functions as the potential site of social change, as seen in the depictions of student riots, it doubles as the site of repressive social violence. *Zabriskie Point*, in fact, inscribes violence into the city's topography. Though Antonioni lampoons the illusionist depiction of the mural's falsified reality, his representation of the street, and the act of driving along it, proves far bleaker.

Los Angeles's synthetic disorder is rendered a cacophonous offensive that tears picture from sound and space from time in order to generate a picture of the city that recalls what Gilles Deleuze describes as "*any-space-whatever*."⁹ Nine discontinuous images of billboards disconnected from their points of origin unfold over 20 seconds and assail the driver-viewer; naturalistic street sounds transform into synthesized, thunderous reverberations; and image-signs looming above undifferentiated portions of urban space elusively speed by the eye, apprehended in an instant but denied contemplative time as an unstable camera, urgently zooming and panning to keep them centered, underscores the difficulty of seizure. When slices of urban space are extracted from their points of origin and montage points up its disjunctive discontinuity as well as its elusive ambiguity, they produce what Deleuze

names any-space-whatever. An any-space-whatever appears in two forms: a disconnected space or an empty or deserted space. According to Deleuze,

Any-space-whatever is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the impossible.¹⁰

Moreover, what Deleuze identifies as the image's "virtual conjunction" allows for images and sounds to be "expressed outside of themselves, outside of spatio-temporal co-ordinates, with their own ideal singularities."¹¹ Any-space-whatever signifies a fragmented depiction of cinematic space whose semiotic status within the concatenation of images is ambiguously rendered both singular and modular, effecting a plenitude of *potential* meaning ("the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways"). Denuded of referential presuppositions, an any-space-whatever presents itself *as itself*, and resonates at the brute level of semiotic denotation.

Yet the contradiction between the singular and modular reveals the very impossibility of achieving pure denotation. For despite *Zabriskie Point's* elaborate reduction of the image's semiotic and narrative function, unmotivated and underdetermined camera movements and shot scales, and potentially modular approach to montage, Los Angeles's strange singularity shines through. Though reference remains radically reduced, *these signs still signify signage*. Montage reinforces outstanding views of "L.A." as always already the site of indeterminate signification and a city that, much like in earlier literary critiques penned by Nathaniel West and J. G. Ballard, signifies nothing but its own insignificance. Antonioni ends his sequence with the abstract image of Los Angeles's industrial foundations. The lens's short focal length collapses space, robbing the image of its referential efficacy, and abstracts the city as a veritable urban wasteland in which all that remains is the shimmer of industrial detritus melting beneath an unrelenting sun.

Zabriskie Point's discordant assembly of urban images and sounds in service of perceptual disorientation cumulatively connotes the city as a site of violence. In a society saturated by violent images, social change becomes predicated on exploiting that very violence. "In 'Zabriskie Point' I suggest that the material wealth of America, which we see in advertisements and on billboards along the roads, is itself a violent influence, perhaps even the root of violence," argued Antonioni. "Not because wealth is bad, but because it is being used not to solve the problems of this society, but instead to try to hide these problems from society."¹² An irrational array of images (irrational because they do not "add up" in a traditional editorial schema) exposes the irrational unconscious of a system (American capitalism) forced to justify its rationality through an act of metaphorical violence (aggressive advertising).

Marcuse identified advertising as the generative mechanism of a society predicated on fulfilling "false" needs through "repressive satisfaction."¹³ *Zabriskie Point's* original screenplay cites Marcuse's "Repressive Tolerance": "If they use violence, they do not start a new chain of violence, but try to break an established one."¹⁴ After driving through Los Angeles, Mark attempts to bail his friend out of jail,

only to have the police incarcerate him. After his release, he makes a beeline to a gun shop, and then heads to a protest to “kill a pig,” but Mark does not shoot the officer, does not consummate the turn to violence. Desperate to leave the city, he walks through its streets, arriving at a billboarded image of a desert sunset, courtesy of Bank of America; it is our first image of the desert, or, more accurately, it is an image of an image of the desert (Figure 3.1). The potential for violent engagement moves from Mark to Daria, from the city to the desert. Rather than depicting these spaces as rigid antinomies, Antonioni emphasizes how they interpenetrate through urban sprawl.

If Los Angeles functioned as the epitome of plastic urbanism, emptied of significance and evacuated of reference, the desert functions as the literal symbol of *nothingness*, a brute depiction of any-space-whatever that doubles as the zero-point for radical regeneration. In 1978, Antonioni described the desert as “nothing, an enormous area of nothing,” in contradistinction to the “urban landscape with its masses of concrete and steel... in a state of perpetual transformation.”¹⁵ While the desert may signify emptiness, the encroaching urban sprawl exemplified by Sunny Dunes suggests that it is not entirely empty. Moreover, as the film tells us, Zabriskie Point was once the site of a vast network of rivers and lakes. In other words, this place, ever-changing, possesses a rich history. The desert further emerges as a landscape mutable to the hand of man and thus testifies to the porosity between the boundary that separates civilization from nature. “The static immobility of nature is what really scares me,” Antonioni claimed, but it is not immobility but the protracted, entropic pull of history that is ultimately terrifying.¹⁶

After touring the desert and participating in a flamboyant hippie orgy, Daria and Mark part ways, and she arrives at a luxury prototype for Sunny Dunes’ semi-urban desert communities. She spies the wives of investors luxuriating poolside, cigarettes and cocktails in hand, a visual rhyme with the earlier depictions of plastic dolls lounging in Sunny Dunes’ promotional film, and tours the house to the sounds of wind chimes. Reflective surfaces, an intricate system of water works, and a series of physical and visual obstructions posit a structure plotted against the austere desert landscape. The building operates as a testament to the sprawl that will, in the eyes of investors, overcome nature with capital.



Figure 3.1 *Zabriskie Point*, dir. Michelangelo Antonioni (Warner Home Video, 2009)

Tortured by the news she hears of Mark's death and disgusted by the materiality on display, Daria, the film shows us, has opened her eyes to the necessity for socio-political change. She leaves, pulls her car off to the side of the road, and looks back over her shoulder at the looming luxury oasis. A point-of-view shot of the house's exterior follows, along with five interior shots depicting what now appears to be an abandoned, evacuated space. The image of a radio, a copy of *National Geographic* fluttering in the wind, a smoldering cigarette, and half-finished drinks evince a relatively recent presence. An anguished Daria throws her face into the car seat as the negotiations between Lee Allen and his potential investors continue until the house silently explodes into a tumult of flames. A shot of Daria follows and retroactively codes the image as her fantasy. She exits the car, stands on the road, and stares intently at the object of her ire. Several shots follow as silence dominates the soundtrack and a strange calm casts an unnatural pall over the scene, until a mushroom cloud of devastation soars and explosion after explosion ensues, again, and again, and again, ten times (Figure 3.2). In a montage that will last nearly six minutes, Antonioni, through Daria, lays waste to American materialism and the hubristic expansion of a mechanized, industrial society into a space whose very ontology evades the manufacture of meaning.

Having destroyed the house completely, repeatedly, Antonioni changes the montage's tenor. Flames fill the screen as scorched ruins crackle on the soundtrack. Vivid, realist depictions of the house's demolition transform into the lyrical images of debris floating in slow motion against an azure sky. Pink Floyd's "Come in Number 51, Your Time Is Up" replaces the heretofore naturalistic conjunction of sound and image and gives way to Roger Waters' liberating howl of terror, David Gilmour's incendiary guitar, and Nick Mason's pitiless percussive pounding. As earlier, Antonioni eradicates the union of sound and image and robs his images of narrational significance in favor of spectacular audiovisual stimulation, a paean to the radically imaginative destruction wrought upon this site of plastic plenitude. Two dozen images of typically American household products—poolside patio furniture, an enormous closet full of clothes, a television set, and a fully stocked fridge explosively hurling boxes of Special K, loaves of Wonder Bread, a chicken, even a lobster through the air—dissolve before our eyes into what rock critic Richard



Figure 3.2 *Zabriske Point*, dir. Michelangelo Antonioni (Warner Home Video, 2009)

Goldstein dubbed “a bouquet of shapes and colors, eagerly grotesque, plosive or sedately unreal.”¹⁷

While the finished film codes this sequence as representing Daria’s interiority, the screenplay envisioned a squadron of bombers laying waste not just to Sunny Dunes, but also the United States in all its urban materiality. Conceived was a vision of monstrous, poetic, and total destruction:

But the bombs are not only falling there. They are falling all over America. On factories, army barracks, skyscrapers, beautiful houses with drives and gardens in parkland, ghettos, humble houses on the outskirts or way out in the desert. Napalm bombs or ones even more terrible blister the earth wherever they strike and transform the legions of All American corpses into the scarred fragments of monsters.¹⁸

A utopian vision of radical sociopolitical change emerges from such wanton destruction. Marcuse argued, “[P]eople recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment . . . The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood.”¹⁹ By mentally rejecting the falsehood of American material culture, Antonioni’s cumulative destruction represents Daria’s own act of Marcusean “negative thinking,” a critical act of dialectical negation designed to imagine a newly liberated world.²⁰ This is her “Great Refusal.” Had Antonioni contented himself with the ostentatious destruction of Sunny Dunes, *Zabriskie Point*’s climactic montage would manifest a crude literalism. Transformation from realist destruction to plaintive images of pure color and pure motion transcend this crass political gesture to produce an ideological vision of change. To think the irrational and impossible, as Daria does, becomes more than an act of destruction, *it becomes an act of creation*.

In the cataleptic crisis of the action-image, Deleuze identified a heightened consciousness of clichés: “They are floating images, these anonymous clichés, which circulate in the external world, but which also penetrate each one of us and constitute his internal world.”²¹ Like Marcuse’s invective against subjective constitution through the appropriation of material objects, Deleuze distinguished the prevalence of presupposed, self-evident “clichés” in the production of interiority. “In order for people to be able to bear themselves and the world,” he writes, “*misery has to reach the inside of consciousness and the inside has to be like the outside*.”²² Achieving such consciousness, however, provides the subject with the ability to break free from such trappings, and Antonioni’s montage works to defamiliarize the familiar, remaking the world by making the preexisting appear very, very strange. The object, annihilated, returns remade through the destructive act of creation.

Godard: From Zero to One

Despite a shared interest in using the cinema to foment radical spectatorial consciousness, the methods employed by Godard in his attempt to produce cinematic corollaries of stateside politics differed dramatically from Antonioni. Asked by

Andrew Sarris in 1970 of what he thought of *Zabriskie Point*, Godard disparagingly replied, “nothing,” gestured toward a table, and asked, “What do you think of this ashtray?”²³ The problem, as Godard emphasized in numerous interviews at the time, emerged from Antonioni’s willingness to work through preexisting modes of capitalist production that Godard had attempted to abandon throughout 1968, even though *One Plus One* and *I A.M.* still fell within their general purview. The struggles against prevailing modes of production, however, proved inextricable from a general critique of the semiotic structures subtending the classical cinema text (read: Hollywood), which Godard sought to reformulate through the radical reduction of style and an inquiry into the historical development of “film language.” This resulted in a twofold gambit that witnessed the increased presence of sociopolitical events within his films by way of an increasingly fragmentary, abstract, and montage-based approach to film form.

Owing to the escalated US military presence on the Indochina peninsula in 1965, Godard vowed to speak of Vietnam in all his films.²⁴ Three intertwined themes relating to sociopolitical developments across the globe abound in his cinema at this time: condemnation of US foreign policy and military intervention abroad; valorization of the Third World struggle for liberation; and critique of the alienated consumerism and the Americanization of everyday life held for contemporary French society. *Pierrot le fou* (1965) inaugurates the interdependence of these themes *en bloc* by linking its depiction of the bourgeois subject’s existential disintegration with a savage critique of US militarism. Drawing a link between the cinematic struggle against American aesthetic imperialism, which Godard claimed already permeated “advanced” cinematic states such as Italy (Cinecittà), the Soviet Union (Mosfilm), and Great Britain (Pinewood), and liberation struggles across the decolonizing world led him to ultimately call upon filmmakers to create “two or three Vietnams within the vast Hollywood-Cinecittà-Mosfilm-Pinewood, etc. empire” that would lead to newly liberated national cinemas of solidarity.²⁵

Economic and aesthetic intervention crystallized in the slogan “return to zero,” which generated an increasingly abstract approach to montage, now understood as the fundamental issue around which the problems of political filmmaking would circle. The “return to zero” critiqued Hollywood’s classical cinema text by austere reducing film style and probing film language’s historical development. The alphabetically arranged composition and decomposition of *Pierrot le fou*’s opening credits one letter at a time manifests the desire to break cinematic language into its minimal units (A-B-C). The presence of two Os, veritable eyes staring back at the audience, also frames this gesture as the return to the zero-point of cinematic style in order to recalibrate the relationship between spectator and screen. The repeated invocation of “Year Zero for the Political Left,” a phrase indebted to the French socialist Marc Paillet, functions as a graphic and sonic trope throughout *Made in U.S.A.* (1966). Furthermore, at the close of *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d’elle* (1966), the filmmaker, operating under the narcotic spell of corporate commerce and the mass media, put himself onto the picture’s soundtrack to whisper, “I listen to commercials on my transistor. Thanks to E-S-S-O, I serenely take the road to dreams and forget all else. I forget Hiroshima and Auschwitz. I forget Budapest. I forget Vietnam and minimum wages. I forget the housing crisis. I forget the famine in India. I’ve forgotten it

all, except that since it takes me back to zero, I have to start over from there.” Godard continued to invoke the zero throughout the 1960s as the transformative space from which one builds anew through the preexisting order since, to follow the Maoist thought then informing his practice, destruction brings with it the seedlings of its own (re)construction: The Theater of Zero at the end of the avowedly Maoist *La Chinoise* (1967); *Weekend’s* (1967) creative destruction by way of a *fin de cinéma*; and Patricia Lumumba’s (Juliet Berto) rejoinder to Émile Rousseau (Jean-Pierre Léaud) in *Le Gai Savoir* (1969) that one must not simply start from zero, but one must *get back to zero*. Patricia’s reformulation of the desire to return to zero reveals that one had to return to zero precisely in order to see that the zero had already moved, and in so doing no longer comprised the zero to which one hoped to return.²⁶ Recognizing the impossibility of returning to a point of unvarnished origin—the tabula rasa the zero signified—Godard’s montage method embraced a relational aesthetic predicated on the operational algorithm of *one plus one*. This emphasized the continual return to a procedural zero by foregrounding the cut, the *plus*, the intervening space between images and sounds. Rather than draw attention to this operation’s synthesis—the outcome that is the *two*—such a method highlights addition *itself*.

The stylistic “return to zero” signaled a disruption of the seamless development of signification, splintered diegetic unity by rendering images and sounds autonomous elements of a textual chain, and drew attention to the material heterogeneity of filmic representation. When montage emphasizes its semiotic effects, refuses to cohere into the illusionist totality of a diegetic world, and draws attention to the material properties of editing, it begins to atomize images, such that their *difference* comes to the fore. Consequently, each shot suspends, and thus opens up its semiotic function within the classical chain of cinematic signifiers. The manifestation of montage’s material properties generates, to follow Deleuze once again, a *differential relation* between images and sounds, a cinema of *interstitial ambivalence* in which primary importance is placed on the conjunctive and disjunctive properties of the cut:

Given one image, another image has to be chosen which will induce an interstice *between* the two. This is not an operation of association, but of differentiation...given one potential, another one has to be chosen, not any whatever, but in such a way that a difference of potential is established between the two, which will be productive of a third or of something new... The fissure has become primary, and as such grows larger. It is not a matter of following a chain of images, even across voids, but of getting out of the chain or the association...it is the method of BETWEEN, “between two images,” which does away with all cinema of the One. It is the method of AND, “this and then that,” which does away with all the cinema of Being=is.²⁷

Interstitially ambivalent montage signals a structure that simultaneously brings images together while keeping them apart. It holds illusionist signification in abeyance by demanding audiences negotiate the space between shots, negating the univocality of the classical cinema’s sign through the paratactic placement of shots in (potentially) contradictory correspondence with one another. Unlike the type of

montage practiced in *Zabriskie Point*, which allowed for homogeneous images to coalesce in the general representation of capitalist violence or liberatory negative thinking, interstitial ambivalence refuses metaphor and the apprehensions of total meaning. Godard called this method of montage *one plus one* and summarized it as an attempt to bring two things together, not to “judge” them, but to merely see the possibility of what relations exist within their juxtaposition.²⁸ Though *Zabriskie Point* followed a decidedly disjunctive approach to editing in its attempt to re-vision radical spectatorship, it still *signified*. What Godard’s montage follows is the logic of *semiotic disintegration*.

All the films Godard produced in 1968—*One Plus One*, *One American Movie*, *Un film comme les autres* (1968), and *Le Gai Savoir*, which was shot in the winter of 1967, but edited in 1968—jettison the pretense of narrative continuity and evince the first tentative attempts to move “from the zero to the one” by way of a differential approach to montage. By discarding reference to narrative almost altogether, these four films hypostatize fragmentation and discontinuity as fundamental features of a more general representational strategy that not only borders on semiotic incoherence when compared to classical cinematic narration, but also moves toward a reflexive cinematic-écriture designed to reduce “film language” into its component parts. This resonated, on the one hand, with contemporary theoretical efforts by cine-structuralists such as Christian Metz, Umberto Eco, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Peter Wollen, among others, to isolate the cinema’s underlying linguistic elements as a signifying system. On the other hand, it partakes of the political modernist project, moving from the Soviets through Brecht, to undermine the organic totality of the classical, realist work. Emphasis on formal heterogeneity and the work’s materiality would thus achieve what the latter identified as “a *radical separation of the elements*,” understood as the stylistic precondition for undoing the stultifying effects of dominant (bourgeois/illusionist) artistic practice.²⁹ Owing to the fact that Godard had not yet committed himself *politically*, his films from 1968 bespeak an investigation into semiotic paralysis, otherwise stated as the inability to harmonize the signifier with its attendant signified in the production of meaning and thus the inability to communicate through preexisting structures of cinematic or linguistic syntax. This resulted in an emphasis on *form* because the political signified could not yet be properly produced. As such, fragmentation forsook semiotic coherence the better to foreground form as the underlying material to be molded at this stage of what remained only a *potentially* political inquiry into the cinema despite the inclusion of political texts, slogans, and iconography from social movements in the United States.

Godard’s emphasis throughout 1968 and beyond on the politics of film form and thus the form of political films intensified contradictions he encountered when attempting to work in the United States. By sending him along the college circuit with *La Chinoise*, Leacock-Pennebaker capitalized on the filmmaker’s celebrity among anti-Establishment cineastes, who took aesthetic and political inspiration from his vitriolic broadsides against normative bourgeois values.³⁰ Yet a contradiction between aesthetes and activists marked his reception.³¹ The former were primed by the aesthetic anarchism characterizing the recently released *Pierrot le fou*. The attempt to work through the “zero,” however, meant that Godard was well on his

way toward the radical politicization that would culminate with the Dziga Vertov Group, the cine-revolutionary endeavor he spearheaded with the activist Jean-Pierre Gorin. Activists, on the other hand, expressed a belief in “the futility of political art” and pounded Godard for his equivocal positions on the politics of direct action and use of strategic violence.³²

The resulting emphasis on form manifests itself in a rigorously structured approach to montage in *One Plus One* and *One American Movie*, both of which attempt the move “from the zero to the one” through the logic of the former’s title. In these instances, this method isolates and antagonistically arranges ten-minute blocks of cinematic reality and reveals films that remain effectively incomplete, or, more correctly, *films divided into two*. Such films cleave gaps between sound-image, space-time, and body-mind dualisms in order to “decompose and recompose” form and subjectivity.³³ Both films foundered. Viewed two years later, Godard, working with Gorin, would disavow *One Plus One* as “my last bourgeois film” because of the conventions underlining its mode of production and his own perceived ignorance about how to properly actualize a radical cinematic *praxis*.³⁴ All parties involved in *I A.M.* would rebuke that production for likeminded reasons. Pennebaker bemoaned “a total lack of comprehension among all the people involved” and faulted Godard for lacking even “the foggiest notion about . . . what he considered to be the American Revolution.”³⁵ The clashing positions on politics and culture among the factions that served as their subjects, including New Left spokesman Tom Hayden, Black Panther Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver, black cultural nationalist LeRoi Jones, the corporate activist Carol Bellamy, and San Francisco’s psych-rock pioneers Jefferson Airplane, refused to coalesce into a filmic tapestry of American upheaval and revealed the Movement itself to be riven with unresolvable contradictions. Yet these films’ suppression by way of rejection demands their recuperation in ways Godard, Gorin, and their Direct Cinema collaborators would not, or could not, imagine.

In *One Plus One*, sequences running nearly ten continuous minutes apiece with occasional editorial interruptions set the Rolling Stones rehearsing “Sympathy for the Devil” against five sequences trafficking in revolutionary and reactionary texts and iconography. Black power militants prepare for the revolution by reading texts by LeRoi Jones, Stokeley Carmichael, and Eldridge Cleaver while terrorizing white women at gunpoint; a camera crew films an interview with the enigmatic Eve Democracy (Anne Wiazemsky); a book proprietor reads from *Mein Kampf*; journalists record an interview with the English activist Frankie Dymon Jr.; and Godard and his crew film Eve’s death and hoist her body atop a panoramic camera crane. Hand-painted title-cards replete with puns and other assorted word games precede each sequence and the filmmakers frequently interrupt their unfolding with shots of an androgynous girl (also played by Wiazemsky) spray-painting Situationist-inspired slogans throughout London. Upon the soundtrack, an unnamed “revolutionary” reads aloud from a political thriller featuring contemporary historical figures in semi-pornographic situations.

Yet Godard’s paradigm of cinematic elements does not add up to a coherent picture of revolutionary struggle. Nor does it amount to a sustained critique of the

culture industries, Black Power, or encroaching fascism. Rather, ambivalence pervades the film's unfolding, and the filmmaker maintains the separateness of his elements in order to provide viewers with a provisional, even arbitrary, approach to editing, despite what appears to be a precise structure: one sequence depicting the Rolling Stones followed by political theater. As with *Zabriskie Point*, space, and the space of violence in particular, function as the formal and thematic material to be molded. On a formal level, *One Plus One*'s linguistic dimensions and sense of semiotic indeterminacy manifest in its opaque figuration of space and differential approach to montage. On the one hand, isolating sequence-shots as discrete elements within a textual chain divests the film of a conventional narrative through-line, which would provide a sense of causal continuity between sequences. The apparent reproduction of spatiotemporal continuity within the sequence-shot further ensures difference by figuring an empirically verifiable space that never overlaps with the shots it abuts. On the other hand, editorial interruptions depicting Wiazemsky spray-painting London on the image track and the co-optation of the soundtrack by the unnamed narrator generate spatiotemporal dislocations. These weakened the images' assumed autonomy and continuity to further mark the disintegration of the diegesis. Separating picture from sound in order to produce a paradigmatic set comprised of the sequence-shot, audio-visual interruptions, the fluid circulation of quoted material, musical performances, and writing, engenders a swarm of signs spiraling in several directions simultaneously.

One Plus One's opening reel lays out these formal tropes *en bloc*. The film opens with a characteristically colorful title card upon which is painted "THE STONES ROLLING" in black, red, yellow, and blue script. Red highlights the letters O, N, and E, such that "ONE" appears twice, signaling not only the film's title, "ONE PLUS ONE," but also its method. Since the "plus" appears nowhere in the text, the title-card's (re)signification demonstrates the recombinant approach to semiosis to be pursued and reveals the indeterminate and un-representable addition that occurs between elements in the production of meaning. The filmmakers then cut to footage depicting the Stones rehearsing. Mick Jagger sits atop a black stool facing Brian Jones as they practice the opening bars of "Sympathy for the Devil." Charlie Watts accompanies them off-screen. Keith Richards enters from off-screen left, readies his guitar, and then takes a seat between Jagger and Jones. Meanwhile, Bill Wyman, dressed in various shades of red, purple, and pink, watches from the side. Though the recording unfolds continuously, the image's figurative qualities are themselves riven by discontinuities within the *mise-en-scène*: mobile dividers parcel out portions of space; rugs spread across the floor produce a checkerboard effect across the bottom half of the image; mounted lights, microphone stands, and the microphone boom's intrusion into the frame send vertices in several directions that rhyme with divisions along the wall. The movement of bodies in and out of the camera's field of vision, the fragmentation figured within the frame, and the delimitation of space, which opposes a more generalized omniscience, highlight the rehearsal footage's contingent qualities and reveal that documentary footage, rather than being the unmediated recording of profilmic reality, appears suffused with discontinuity, if only on a formal level (Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3 *One Plus One/Sympathy for the Devil*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (Raro Video, 2005)

With a cut three minutes into the first reel, the filmmakers depict our androgynous female spray-painting slogans on the windows of her hotel (such as “Hilton-Stalin,” “So-VietCong,” and “Cinemarxism”). Concomitant with her appearance, they overlay a distorted male voice-over upon the soundtrack. “I left Bolivia and I came to London where I hid in a toilet to escape the police,” he begins by way of an introduction. “Raising the lid, I could see Elizabeth’s fat white behind on which Lyndon Johnson was projecting an Andy Warhol movie. I was fed up, but was scared, too. American spies were all over the place. As Lenin put it, ‘what now?’ So to kill time, I picked up a political novel, opened it at random and began to read. Page 12.” Populated with contemporary celebrities and politicians, the voice-over narration, like the graffiti, de-politicizes political signs in order to emphasize their arbitrary, linguistic dimensions and produce an antagonistic aesthetic predicated on audiovisual collision.

Audiovisual interruptions of this sort disrupt the film’s attempts to figure diegetic space and result in spatiotemporal ambiguities. When the filmmakers cut back to the Stones, they employ a reverse-field edit that shifts camera perspective 180-degrees (Figure 3.4). On the one hand, this reinforces the audience’s empirical apprehension of the space by “suturing” present and absent fields.³⁶ We see, for example, the space the camera previously occupied. The two images, however, function as “mirrored” inversions of each other such that the placement of Jagger, Wyman, and Richards reproduces almost exactly the previous composition. The apparent graphic continuity between these two compositions, in fact, masks an unsettling temporal discontinuity, which makes it difficult to perceive the second



Figure 3.4 *One Plus One/Sympathy for the Devil*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (Raro Video, 2005)

shot as something *different* from the first. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether or not the androgynous girl or the voice-over narrator occupy as-yet-undetermined spaces to be diegetically linked to the Stones or something completely different. As such, the film both evokes and undoes the production of diegetic space by essentially producing multiple, nonintersecting diegetic “realms,” which the proliferation of political-theatrical sequences at the junkyard, bookshop, and park compound. The film further maintains and frustrates temporal relations by engaging the “code of simultaneity” in order to render temporality suspect.³⁷

The separation of the cinema’s underlying elements into component parts—sound stripped from image, time torn from space—also manifests in the film’s approach to performance: lifeless, stilted, mediated. Emphasis on mediation produces a veritable gap between signifier, in this case, the speaking or musical subject, and the signified, which emerges not from within them, but from without, from the circulation of preexisting texts that the performers quote, recite, and repeat. The separation of body from mind splits the unary subject to propose a profoundly *social* subject, whose subjectivity emerges only from an encounter with the media/other. In the film’s second reel, for example, black militants declaim extracts from LeRoi Jones’ *Blues People* and *Black Music*, Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice*, and Stokeley Carmichael’s speech from a rally in support of Black Panther Party leader Huey Newton; in the fourth reel, the book proprietor draws a sermon from *Mein Kampf*; in the sixth reel, the questions asked of Eve imply their own answers; the voice-over narration displaces itself by reading from a novel; and the rehearsed repetition of “Sympathy for the Devil” transforms into an almost automatic self-quotation. We

witness the Stones as alienated laborers, atomized from one another while wearing playback headphones and cordoned off within their cubicles.

Textual mediation is linked with its material counterpart as machines that produce, reproduce, and distribute sounds and images swarm the *mise-en-scène*: the camera-crew who follow Eve Democracy, the journalists who record their interview with Dymon, and the array of devices around the Stones' performance space at Olympic Sound Studios. As Wiazemsky's spray-paint sloganeering and the voice-over superficially depoliticized geopolitical signifiers by denuding them of referential efficacy, so, too, the filmmaker's emphasis on mediation as a social *a priori* depoliticizes the thematic content of the texts intoned, and draws attention to the social dimensions of the subject's constitution, foregrounding, much as Althusser's writing on the function of ideology for the foundation of subjectivity,³⁸ the forms through which subjectivity is produced. In this polyphonic heteroglossia ironically characteristic of Godard's very particular approach to enunciation, Peter Wollen observes, "[T]he film can no longer be seen as a discourse with a single subject, the filmmaker/auteur. Just as there are a multiplicity of narrative worlds, so too there are a multiplicity of speaking voices."³⁹ Thus, the film's splintering of diegetic unity decenters Godard's individual, authorial voice in favor of a textual weave predicated on the currency of quotation and the fluid circulation of competing ideas.

One Plus One culminates with a sequence following the title-card, "Beneath the Stones the Beach." A direct reference to ongoing events of May and June, when students spray-painted that slogan throughout the streets of Paris, and suffused with a double-entendre originating in the film's subject-matter, the film's various components cohere briefly and for the sole point during its unfolding. A black militant armed with an automatic rifle runs over a sand dune with Eve in tow as the book proprietor guns them down. The camera follows along a lateral track as a photographer snaps pictures and Godard runs past the apparatus's field of vision. As Eve and the militant circle right, the camera follows, revealing the tracks upon which it glides, thereby folding the represented within the means of its representation. As the film coheres, it simultaneously breaks apart with Godard's presence on-screen as *metteur-en-scène* and the depiction of apparatuses of production—the camera-crane, boom microphones, members of the crew—intruding upon the film's already incoherent diegesis at the very moment when all seems to coalesce.

By leaving unarticulated the exact nature of the relation between the Rolling Stones and politics, *One Plus One* delineates not an equivalence, but a relation designed to foment thought by soliciting the active participation of the audience within an open signifying structure that asks spectators to choose this...*and then that*. Displacing authorial agency by presenting spectators with an array of images and sounds as opposed to a coherent representation of what they might signify asks audiences to share in the processes of signification. The effect reveals this montage to be a dynamic process productive of a subject rather than by a subject. By abdicating algorithmic synthesis in order to emphasize the cut's intervening, interstitial qualities, "one plus one" obviates a cinema that articulates "being = is," as Deleuze described. This, however, creates the possibilities that new subjectivities may yet emerge from within the interstice where montage—the differential choice between two charged potentials—is practiced.

Critics sensitive to the film invested its analytical inquiry into language as constitutive of new forms of potentially revolutionary cinematic syntax concomitant with a more general shift in our understanding of “man” as a concept. The counterculture documentarian Peter Whitehead concluded that the film’s deconstructive qualities indicated “a revolution going on within language, and if language does not survive, then, so Godard seems to suggest, then MAN, as a thinking and communicating animal, may not continue to exist either.”⁴⁰ Whitehead appeared to be thinking, above all, of the concluding remarks put forth by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things*, a book with which Godard possessed some familiarity, and in which the philosopher argued that “man is neither the oldest nor the most constant problem that has been posed for human knowledge” in order to deduce that “some event” might wipe away contemporary conceptualizations of humanity, such that “man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.”⁴¹ *One Plus One*’s conclusion upon the beach suggests the struggle to revolutionize the image of man for the future, allegorically signaled by the rise of the camera-crane, the red flag of the workers flying alongside the black flag of the anarchists, and cutting to black as Eve Democracy’s sacrificed corpse points to the boundless horizons of a noon-day sky while the Stones strum a few bars of an as-yet-incomplete “Sympathy for the Devil” over the soundtrack.

One American Movie, an attempt to produce a cinematic tapestry of American social upheaval, was to capitalize on the formal torsions systematically organized by *One Plus One*—rending picture from sound, space from time, and body from mind—by focusing more specifically on the ways cinema mediates subjectivity through the bifurcation of fiction and documentary. Though never completed, a particularly illuminating passage from the extant version, assembled by D. A. Pennebaker in 1971 as *One P.M.*, or *One Parallel Movie* (or *One Pennebaker Movie*, Godard quipped), reveals the method Godard hoped to employ. Godard sits in Leacock and Pennebaker’s Manhattan offices and describes a film to be separated in two: A and B. To A would correspond documentary reality by depicting the corporate activist Carol Bellamy, Black Panther Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver, counterculture icons Jefferson Airplane, SDS leader Tom Hayden, and a young black girl from the Bronx. To B would correspond transformations of this documentary reality into fictions restaged by actors. Diegetic inversion, however, would occur at the level of race and gender as well, such that a male actor (Rip Torn) would re-state that which Bellamy advocated, a blonde actress would substitute for Cleaver, Jefferson Airplane would convert into an actor and actress, and so on. As the speaking subject found itself infused with the voice of an other in order to reveal a social subject riven by division in *One Plus One*, so, too, the transformation of a historical actor into a fictive performer bespeaks a split within the unary subject and thus the dynamics of their “originary” constitution within ideology.

The split, however, is here *formalized* through the institutional distinction between documentary and fiction, such that the former enfold into the latter to reveal its constructed qualities, while the latter enfold into the former to reveal its contingencies. In this way, the ultimate effect of *One American Movie* was to be a radical demystification of the *image* through a series of formal gestures that

grew out of *One Plus One*, but would here be concretized as a set of stipulations: ten-minute shots (“physically one piece of the film” emphasizes Godard to Leacock and Pennebaker’s astonishment), no “reportage,” which translated as little to no zooming and delimited camera movements, and reduced emphasis on editing. “In my opinion,” spoke Godard, “there is no editing at all . . . The interesting thing is to put them block by block just to choose the right position, the right ending, and to cut it and to put it together, because the movie is not in one piece, or another piece, it’s the relationship between each other.”

To draw the spectator’s attention to the relationship between fiction and documentary by placing each in dynamic contact with the other would thus make even more explicit what was already intuited in *One Plus One*, namely, that reality itself is always already mediated and mediation functions as a social relation in the production of subjectivity. Furthermore, by grounding this critique in the medium’s material limitations and presenting audiences with the “same thing” from two different perspectives, *One American Movie* would have expanded the scope of its critique of subjectivity to more directly account for the spectator. In contradistinction to the image projected by Hollywood, which promoted the image’s autonomy from reality and thus the subject’s autonomy from the image, *One American Movie*’s design would have inscribed the spectator within the gap institutionally enforced between fiction and documentary.

Problems of politics as much as filmmaking plagued the production, and resulted in its abandoning. Pennebaker grumbled about Godard’s ignorance of the specificity of stateside politics and social movements.⁴² In terms of cinematic style, however, the fundamental problem lay in Leacock and Pennebaker’s Direct Cinema approach. Should the film attempt a systematic deconstruction of reality the better to prove its social determination ideologically, then a filmmaking style invested in plucking unmediated representations of said reality would fail to produce the intended critical effect. As Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni observed in their criticism of Leacock and other practitioners of Direct Cinema, “reality holds within itself no hidden kernel of self-understanding, of theory, of truth, like a stone inside a fruit. We have to manufacture those.”⁴³ Gorin, speaking in the context of the Dziga-Vertov Group’s 1970 tour across the United States, explained, “*One American Movie* is still made on the old principle which says, ‘Go and fetch images, and then try to edit them.’ The point we are at now is to build images—build images as simple as possible so you can build your analysis. And since those images proceed from political analysis as well as going toward it, you’ve got a triple principle: you edit before the shooting, during the shooting, and after the shooting. So you have three stages, closely related one to the other, and it’s a general movement. The problem is not even to build images, but to build *right* images.”⁴⁴

Lacking any sense of montage before shooting, Leacock, Pennebaker, and Godard’s production lapsed into the effervescent recording of empirical reality as opposed to using the cinema as a tool to *structure* reality. When asked elsewhere to elaborate upon the political distinction between the production of an image and the taking of a picture, Godard returned to questions of subjectivity and mediation, but now infused with a critique of Hollywood ideology:

Because you belong to a certain society today in America, or we in France, you just think that when you are speaking that your words and your structure, that they go together, that there is a complete unity. But there is no unity. There is a continuous struggle between what you say and what you think and the way we are living in a certain social condition. You are not a unity. You are trying to be a unity, but the fact is you are not. And the movie represents that in a very simple way—it's just image and sound—it's not just adding together—it's a struggle. Hollywood wants to just add them together there on the screen, just like you put a stamp on a letter.⁴⁵

Cinematically, the opposition between sound and image concretizes the struggle between the individual and his or her subjective formation through ideology. By transliterating the struggle for subjectivity into cinematic terms, Godard emphasized the material heterogeneity of the apparatus, a point effectively elided by Hollywood's illusionist addition of sound to image, in order to demystify the *structural* nature of ideological interpellation. Undoing the mystifying nature of this unity, however, would have to proceed through the production of *disunity* by way of the Dziga Vertov Group's austere montage and its negative corollary, *démontage*, understood as the *taking apart* of perceived unities in an effort to proliferate discontinuities and differences in the form of "unwatchable" films that effectively tortured and tore apart their audiences as much as they did dominant ideology and filmic matter. The films produced after Godard's 1968 sojourn to the United States under the guise of this collective enterprise (*British Sounds*, *Pravda*, *Wind from the East*, *Struggles in Italy*, *Until Victory*, and *Tout va bien*) infuse the demystification intuited by these two "failed" films with a political corollary that eluded the Godard of 1968. Though the Dziga Vertov Group purged *One Plus One* from their filmography and discarded *One American Movie* as "a dead corpse," the decomposition of the cinema into its component parts through his encounter with an unrealized American Revolution created the formal contours to be exploited in the name of a proper cinematic politics.⁴⁶

Reality in Abeyance

Montage translates experience into representation, but Antonioni and Godard's independent methodologies also reveal the virtues and limitations of such an aesthetic from the perspective of spectatorial labor. *Zabriskie Point*'s representations of Los Angeles and its permeable relationship with the neighboring Death Valley not only reveals the anxieties of a foreigner visiting a strange land, but also signals an attempt to encapsulate the struggles of those who hoped to remake the fabric of American society. Its formal depiction of Los Angeles as an organ of plastic signification reveals the illusions upon which an increasingly irrational society rests, and frames the city as a site of incomprehensible violence whose vicious address warrants an equally violent redress. Its sprawl further serves as a penetrating visualization of capital's arrogantly totalizing teleology. Yet Daria's explosive vision suggests that to prevent *nothing* from reproducing itself upon *nothing as nothing*, the city, to be saved, must be destroyed, a profoundly ironic and disturbing logic that the film shared with US Army policy in Vietnam. Moreover, in its pursuit of a precise representation of

radicality, it ultimately reinforces the passivity conventional cinematic spectatorship asks of its citizens under the disturbing sign of destruction. In short, *Zabriskie Point* represents the spectacular fantasy of refusal rather than refusal itself.

"Every film is the product of the society that produced it. That's why American cinema is so bad now; it reflects an unhealthy society," spoke Godard to a reporter from *Newsweek* upon arriving in the United States in February 1968.⁴⁷ From this he cultivated a mode of cinematic presentation rooted in a radical austerity designed to combat the very spectacularity upon which *Zabriskie Point* was built. Films need to be "less and less spectacular because I think very strongly now that the more spectacular you are, the more you are absorbed by the things you are trying to destroy," he argued. "You don't destroy anything at all, and it's you who are destroyed because of the spectacle."⁴⁸ Emphasizing montage's materiality solicits the spectator's participatory labor in the film's unfolding and creates the possibility that radical spectatorship concomitant with a new radical imaginary may yet emerge. Semiotic indeterminacy—the possibility of connective failure built into the disjunctive gaps between images and sounds—such is the space where we may go beyond our current realities to partake in the creation of a new, potential reality that exists within reality, but still remains invisible as yet.

Notes

1. "The Movement" was an ambiguous, catchall term recurring throughout this period to refer to groups and individuals dedicated to transforming the shape of US society from a left, or progressive, perspective. As Todd Gitlin explains of its polysemy, "By 'the movement' some meant specifically the civil rights movement, but the term usually referred to both black and white activists who shared some commitment to the realization of civil rights, peace, and some sort of radically democratic political-economic and cultural transformation, and who believed in undertaking some sort of direct action toward those ends." See Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 293.
2. David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema, American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 4–18.
3. Gordon Poole, "Antonioni Ripe for Hippie Heartland," *Berkeley Barb*, June 23–29, 1967, 4.
4. Anonymous, "The Saga of 'Zabriskie Point': How It All Happened." Undated manuscript, Pacific Film Archive, 2.
5. Lawrence M. Bensky, "Antonioni Comes to the Point," *New York Times*, December 15, 1968, D23; Lenny Lipton, "At the Flick," *Berkeley Barb*, February 7–15, 1969, 6; Jack Hamilton, "Antonioni's America," *Look*, November 18, 1969, 40.
6. Bensky, "Antonioni Comes to the Point," D23.
7. Hamilton, "Antonioni's America," 36; Louise B. Sweeney, "Zabriskie Lives!" *Show* (February, 1970): 40–43, 81; Beverly Walker, "Michelangelo and the Leviathan: The Making of *Zabriskie Point*," *Film Comment* no. 9–10 (September, 1992): 36–49.
8. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).
9. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans., Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 109.
10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 102.
12. Flatley, "Antonioni Defends 'Zabriskie Point' 'I Love This Country,'" D15.
13. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 5, 7.
14. Michelangelo Antonioni, Fred Gardner, Tonino Guerra, Clare Peploe, and Sam Shepard, "Zabriskie Point," Shooting Script, undated, unsigned draft deposited as part of the Screenplay Collection, Special Collections, Cecil H. Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, 26; Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in *Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 131.
15. Bert Cardullo, "Film is Life: An Interview with Michelangelo Antonioni," in *Michelangelo Antonioni Interviews* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2008), 143.
16. Ibid.
17. Richard Goldstein, "Did Antonioni Miss the 'Point'?" *New York Times*, February 22, 1970.
18. "Zabriskie Point" Shooting Script, 100.
19. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 9, 12
20. Ibid., 63.
21. Deleuze, *Movement-Image*, 208.
22. Ibid., 209 (my emphasis).
23. This exchange occurs in Ralph Tannhauser's 1970 documentary *Godard in America*.
24. Michael Goodwin and Greil Marcus, *Double Feature* (New York: Outerbridge & Lazard, Inc., 1972), 12.
25. Jean-Luc Godard, *Godard on Godard*, ed. and trans., Tom Milne (New York: Da Capo, 1968), 243.
26. Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma* (Paris: Éditions Albatros, 1980), 243.
27. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans., Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 179–180.
28. Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, 250.
29. Bertolt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," in *Brecht on Theatre, The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans., John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 37 (emphasis in original).
30. L. M. 'Kit' Carson, "The American Journey of Jean-Luc Godard," *Eye*, September 1968, 58; Vincent Canby, "Filmmakers Hit Lecture Trail in a New Version of Gold Rush," *New York Times* February 15 1968, 47; Richard Brody, *Everything is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 323.
31. Claire Clouzot, "Godard and the U.S." *Sight and Sound* 37, no. 3 (Summer, 1968): 112, 114.
32. Tom Luddy, David Mairowitz, and Juris Svedsen, "Talking Politics with Godard," *San Francisco Express* March 14, 1968, 8–9.
33. Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, 239.
34. Kent E. Carroll, "Film and Revolution: Interview with the Dziga-Vertov Group," in *Focus on Godard*, ed., Royal S. Brown (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), 61–62.
35. G. Roy Levin, *Documentary Explorations: 15 Interviews with Film-Makers* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), 245.
36. The cinematic theory of "suture," which reached a critical apogee in 1970s film theory, drew upon Lacanian psychoanalysis to metaphorically describe the viewing subject's relation to a film as a text. In particular, it framed spectatorship as a dynamic process joining the viewer to a film's "chain of signifiers" in order to produce a subject not only capable of "sewing" together the heterogeneous images and sounds before him or her

- into a diegetic continuum, but also a subject desirous of more images and sounds. See Jacques-Alain Miller, "Suture (Elements of the Logic of the Signifier)," in *Screen* 18, no. 4 (Winter, 1977): 24–34; Jean-Pierre Oudart, "Cinema and Suture," *Screen* 18, no. 4 (Winter, 1977): 35–47; Stephen Heath, "On Suture" in *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 76–112; Daniel Dayan, "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema" in *Movies and Methods vol. 1* ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); and William Rothman "Against 'The System of Suture,'" in *ibid.* For a contemporary reevaluation, see Pavle Levi, *Cinema by Other Means* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 143–144.
37. This is not unlike the ways in which *La Chinoise*, as Jacques Aumont demonstrates, simultaneously frustrates and maintains figural and editorial conventions. See Jacques Aumont, "This is Not a Textual Analysis (Godard's *La Chinoise*)" in *Camera Obscura* no. 8–9–10 (Spring/Summer/Fall, 1982): 131–162.
 38. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127–186.
 39. Peter Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema: *Vent d'Est*," in *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-strategies* (London: Verso, 1982), 86.
 40. Peter Whitehead, "Films and Viewing: Godard Reviews, 1966–1969," *Frameworks* 52, no. 1 (Spring, 2011): 395.
 41. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage, 1970/1994), 386–387. On Godard's familiarity with Foucault, see Jacques Bontemps, Jean-Louis Comolli, Michel Delahaye, et al., "Struggle on Two Fronts: A Conversation with Jean-Luc Godard," *Film Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (Winter, 1968–1969): 25.
 42. Levin, *Documentary Explorations: 15 Interviews with Film-Makers*, 245.
 43. Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," in *Cahiers du Cinéma 1969–1972: The Politics of Representation*, ed., Nick Browne (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 63.
 44. Goodwin and Marcus, *Double Feature*, 21.
 45. Carroll, "Film and Revolution," 64.
 46. Goodwin and Marcus, *Double Feature*, 9.
 47. Raymond A. Sokolov, "'The Truth 24 Times a Second,'" *Newsweek*, February 12, 1968, 91.
 48. Jonathan Cott, "Interview with Godard," *Rolling Stone*, June 14, 1969.

CHAPTER 4

Turning Inwards: The Politics of Privacy in the New American Cinema

Joshua Guilford

In a 1967 lecture, “Liberation from the Affluent Society,” Herbert Marcuse describes a novel challenge facing then-contemporary efforts at political resistance.¹ Originally delivered at the Congress of the Dialectics of Liberation in London, Marcuse’s address outlines the rise of what he terms “the affluent society,” a social configuration brought about by the emergence of late capitalism wherein inequality and repression occur coextensive with a dramatically increased standard of living for the majority of the population.² Within this context, he explains, any demand for liberation had to be articulated against a socioeconomic apparatus that, despite clearly exploitative effects, was largely succeeding in stultifying the subjective need for opposition among the traditional agents of historical change. This need was being suppressed not only by the widespread satisfaction of vital necessities, but also by the affluent society’s distinctly new facility for manipulating needs themselves, or for penetrating the deepest realms of human experience—from consciousness down to the unconscious—and subordinating them to the dictates of capital. Both the critical workings of the intellect and the psychical, emotional, and instinctual impulses comprising the “soul” had been fully assimilated within the reigning social order. For Marcuse, this remarkable deepening of control demanded a complete rethinking of existing strategies of liberation, as the possibility of resistance seemed to depend on a transformation of the inner, “organic” disposition of the individual, essentially presupposing the emergence of an entirely “new type of man, with a vital, biological drive for liberation . . .”³ In this sense, when Marcuse comes to call for a “new anthropology,” or a concerted effort to bring this new man into being, he envisions a mode of political practice oriented toward “opening and . . . activat[ing] a depth dimension of human existence,” or toward the production of an inner, subjective realm configured in opposition to the repressive aspirations instilled by the affluent society.⁴

I begin with this evocative contribution to the political imagination of the 1960s' counterculture because I believe Marcuse's reflections on the affluent society offer a sophisticated formulation of a far more general claim subtending certain strands of leftist discourse from this period. At its base, this claim centers on the political import of privacy, or rather, on the oppositional value inhering within a realm of inner experience that is frequently deemed irrelevant to discussions of radical politics. In a manner that resonates with numerous analyses of mass society and mass culture put forward throughout the 1950s and 1960s in disciplines such as sociology, political theory, and cultural criticism, Marcuse here worries that the startling ubiquity of control in late modernity was eradicating the individual's capacity for thinking, feeling, and acting in ways other than those dictated by capital.⁵ This is what he elsewhere refers to as "one-dimensionality," or the specific condition of alienation effected when the previously "private space" of inner experience becomes fully integrated into the workings of the social.⁶ Because Marcuse believed this inner dimension provided the ground for individual dissociation and hence the condition of possibility for anything like collective resistance, its dwindling was said to constitute the most urgent threat to projects of alternative world building within the context of late capitalism. In stark contrast to classical conceptions of the private as wholly *other* to the space and time of political praxis, as well as more recent emphases on the oppositional value held within decidedly *public* spheres of discourse and activity, in Marcuse's writings and speeches from this period, the most integral dimension of political activity is located in the deep, interior recesses of the private self.

What were the stakes of this defense of privacy in the broader context of the cultural rebellions of the 1960s? And what might the "new anthropology" that Marcuse envisions in this speech look like?

In this chapter, I suggest that independent American film practices of this period offer an especially fruitful context within which to examine the oppositional import attributed to inner experience in countercultural discourse of the 1960s. Specifically, I focus on the centrality afforded to interiority in the films and critical discourse of the New American Cinema (NAC), an independent film culture that came into being in the United States at the end of the 1950s, on the threshold of the dramatic reorganization of American culture that redefined diverse registers of artistic and political practice throughout the following decade. As an alternative cultural formation working—in the words of their primary spokesman, Jonas Mekas—to "build...the New Man" by revitalizing the dwindling register of the "soul," the NAC anticipated Marcuse's call for a "new anthropology" in many ways.⁷ Rebellious against the excessive impersonality of late-modern American culture (exemplified by the reified products of Hollywood), the NAC stressed the oppositional potential of a highly personal film practice: an intimate cinema modeled after the chaotic workings of inner experience whose intense, sensory appeal could be mobilized toward the redemption of human interiority. The project of this film culture thus hinged on the creative repurposing of a seemingly lifeless cinematic apparatus as a distinctly intimate technology, one generative of new modes of being-in-depth immune to the leveling force of mass society and mass culture.

I therefore explore how this investment in inwardness structures both the NAC's critical writings and their elaboration of an "immediate" filmic grammar, while

also considering how this movement's defense of interiority intersects with more widespread political debates about privacy in Cold War America. Paying particular attention to a set of films that draw on the affective resonances of then-contemporary musical forms such as folk and jazz in an effort to develop a more intimate relationship with the viewer, I also analyze the political and conceptual stakes of this movement's pursuit of intimacy, examining the representational practices that this pursuit motivated as well as its theoretical limitations.

The Redemptive Project of the NAC

The heading "New American Cinema" was first used by Mekas as a critical category to designate a set of independent American films made between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s that, despite considerable differences at the level of style, genre, ideology, and mode of production, seemed to share a basic disregard for the established formal conventions and professional standards reigning in both Hollywood and the international Art cinema, as well as a vested interest in representing then-contemporary reality.⁸ Arguing that works such as *Shadows* (John Cassavetes, 1959), *Pull My Daisy* (Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie, 1959), and *Come Back, Africa* (Lionel Rogosin, 1959) signaled the emergence of a new generation of American filmmakers, Mekas championed these artists' "derangement" of then-dominant aesthetic conventions and social norms, and posited the NAC as a distinctly American cinematic rebellion paralleling the various European new waves that came into being after World War II.⁹ Beginning in the summer of 1960, however, Mekas organized a series of meetings with filmmakers, producers, and other figures involved in New York's independent film scene in an effort to give the NAC a more concrete organizational structure. These meetings led to the publication of the celebrated "First Statement of the New American Cinema Group" in the summer of 1961, a collective manifesto that Mekas wrote in an effort to synthesize the positions of its 26 signatories—including Shirley Clarke, Gregory Markopoulos, Emile de Antonio, and others—and to officially announce the NAC's constitution as a singular "movement" organized around a shared set of beliefs and goals. Emphasizing the NAC's commitment to transforming the industrially defined cinematic apparatus into a medium of unhindered "personal expression," the "First Statement" denounces the artificial slickness, sterility, and "[moral] corrupt[ion]" of the commercial "Product Film," against which it poses the sincerity, vitality, and truthfulness of the new cinema, famously asserting, "We don't want false, polished, slick films—we prefer them rough, unpolished, but alive; we don't want rosy films—we want them the color of blood."¹⁰

This critique of the established cinema's immorality points to an important aspect of the NAC's representation of itself as a movement. Though critics and historians frequently emphasize stylistic or material similarities linking the disparate filmmakers affiliated with the NAC—their adoption of a quasi-*vérité* shooting style, for instance, or their development of a pseudo-industrial mode of production—the main spokespersons of this movement tended to cite a more ambitious task or project when seeking to define its organizing principle.¹¹ Referred to variously as ethical, spiritual, or radical in nature, this project was predicated, as Annette Michelson has

observed, “on a conception of film as being, in the very broadest sense, redemptive of the human condition itself.”¹² Hence, Ken Kelman’s influential definition of the NAC as a “spiritual medium . . . [whose] primary drive is to replenish the human spirit which has been eroded as much as our earth has been by ‘progress,’” and Mekas’s repeated insistence that the NAC’s filmic rebellion was a sign of these artists’ participation in a broader “ethical movement” sweeping through American culture of the postwar period—a movement oriented toward saving the human soul.¹³ For Mekas, the NAC’s interest in elaborating a more personal, improvisatory mode of film practice represented a vital “turn inwards,” or an effort to locate some “un-corrupt basis for . . . life” by reviving a realm of inner experience being stifled by the excessively rational character of mass society and mass culture.¹⁴ Informed in part by the popularization of Zen Buddhism and psychoanalysis in postwar American culture, Mekas conceived the inner in stark opposition to the rational intellect and its worldly manifestations, positioning the former as a deep, opaque realm of anarchic impulses wholly inaccessible to reason. Within his critical-theoretical schema, the NAC’s abandonment of established formal conventions in favor of a disorganized but vital aesthetic appears as an effort to elaborate a filmic grammar structurally analogous to the chaotic movements of the soul: a “spontaneous cinema.”¹⁵

The phrasing of the NAC’s redemptive project parallels Marcuse’s critique of one-dimensionality in important respects. For artists of the NAC, mass culture and mass society exhibited a distressing hostility to interiority that they believed was eradicating the very basis of humanness. In addition to Mekas’s and Kelman’s anxieties about this process, this sentiment can also be discerned, for instance, in Stan Vanderbeek’s description of underground filmmaking as an effort to produce “private art that can be made public” as a way of countering the “public art we know, which cannot be made private”; in Stan Brakhage’s vision of society as a “machine” “bent on destroying that which is alive within its individuals”; in Ron Rice’s paranoid characterization of civilization as a “monster” seeking to “rape your consciousness” through various “spat loudspeaker direction systems”; and in Allen Ginsberg’s influential critique of the mass media as the instrument of a “vast conspiracy to impose one level of mechanical consciousness on mankind” and “exterminate” all manifestations of “contemplative individuality.”¹⁶ As is indicated by the extremity and urgency of such statements, members of the NAC envisioned the decline of inner experience as the central crisis of late modernity, stressing that the impending loss of this dimension necessitated—in Mekas’s terms—an attack on all existing “public ideologies, values, and ways of life . . .”¹⁷

The NAC’s tendency to frame its inward turn as a turn away from the outer world of “public art” and “public ideologies” has led to significant criticisms of this movement’s politics, or its apparent disengagement from the political realm properly conceived.¹⁸ While such criticisms are not unfounded, a resurgence of interest in the centrality of privacy and domesticity to American politics of the post–World War II period has demonstrated the need to reconsider lingering perceptions of the NAC as an essentially apolitical or disengaged cultural formation. Particularly valuable here is Deborah Nelson’s analysis of American legal discourse and confessional poetry, *Pursuing Privacy in Cold War America*. At the end of the 1950s, Nelson shows, the

U.S. witnessed the onset of an extensive “privacy crisis” wherein apocalyptic pronouncements of the “loss” or “death” of privacy proliferated through nearly every level of American social, cultural, and political discourse in response to a host of new developments—new surveillance technologies, the rise of a culture of willed self-disclosure, etc.—that rendered visible the underlying fictiveness of traditional conceptions of the private sphere as a stable, autonomous realm.¹⁹ This growing recognition of privacy’s instability generated a widespread “crisis” because, within the context of the Cold War, “the sanctity of the private sphere was generally perceived to be the most significant point of contrast between [democratic societies and totalitarian regimes].”²⁰ Due to totalitarianism’s definition as a mode of governance oriented toward the domination of private as well as public life, the perceived “loss” of privacy in Cold War America appeared to threaten the very foundation of democratic freedom, whose “potency . . . in cold war rhetoric was . . . not its cultivation of a vibrant and free public discourse but its vigilant protection of private autonomy.”²¹

This “privacy crisis” manifested itself in highly divergent ways. The cult of suburban domesticity that governs cultural imaginations of the postwar era is among the most obvious of these. Yet Cold War America’s efforts to promote the zone of privacy supposedly sheltered by the suburban household as an emblem of democratic freedom only constitutes one, particularly paradoxical, response to this crisis—a response that undermined the very privacy it sought to protect by publicizing and politicizing it.²² The distinctly oppositional thrust of the NAC’s redemptive project indicates that concerns about the “loss” of privacy also motivated various criticisms of—and modes of resistance against—the dominant social and cultural tendencies of this period. Even amidst containment ideology’s attempt to regain private stability in the form of private property, there emerged a prominent set of artists, social critics, and political theorists, ranging from the confessional poets discussed by Nelson and the filmmakers of the NAC to public intellectuals such as Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, who sought to elucidate the totalitarian aspects of mass society and mass culture by decrying their destructive impact on the private self.²³ Thus, while the NAC’s investment in privacy might seem to reveal strange parallels between this “radical” film culture and Cold War conservatism, it would be wrong to equate the former’s defense of inner experience with the latter’s promotion of suburbia as the site and source of human freedom. Emerging as an explicit effort to counter the dehumanizing logic of late-modern private and public spheres, the NAC’s drive to reclaim inner experience as a source of vitality and rebellion should not be read as a symptom of this movement’s secret conservatism, but rather as a testament to its participation in one of the defining political debates of the postwar era. Much like the confessional poets with whom artists of the NAC collaborated, these filmmakers “were preoccupied with the nature of privacy itself” at a specific moment when the value, meaning, and composition of the private stood at the heart of American public discourse.²⁴ And rather than affirming dominant conceptions of the private sphere as a stable, coherent space in which normative values are secured and reproduced, the NAC conceived this realm as a fluid, opaque experiential register destructive of such norms. Their view of the private thus adheres more closely to what Julia Kristeva has described as the domain of “intimate revolt”—a timeless,

interior region of return and negation; the space “where we end up when we question apparent meanings and values.”²⁵

In addition to obscuring this movement’s participation in such debates, the tendency to read the NAC’s inward turn as an instance of complete disengagement from the surrounding world also risks eliding the social dimensions of this movement’s redemptive project. To be sure, members of the NAC did value artistic practice as a mode of private introspection, or a purely personal method for evading one’s surrounding culture and accessing a more “authentic” register of experience. Yet the radical potential these artists attributed to cinema was in fact dependent on this medium’s relational basis, its orientation toward viewers.

In various writings from the late 1950s and early 1960s, for instance, Mekas celebrates cinema for its intensely intimate mode of address, emphasizing the capacity of particular films to effect a profound mental, emotional, or spiritual transformation in their viewers. Whereas the poetic works of the avant-garde are praised for their ability to “stir us out of our numbness” or to plunge a “spearhead into the [viewer’s] heart” that dissolves the contours of her/his ego, provoking the viewer into a “communion” with the “soul” of the filmmaker through which that viewer is rendered “more beautiful,” even comparatively popular movies that managed to shake free of classical narrative conventions and exploit the concrete immediacy of the filmic image are said to “cut into one’s consciousness with the sharpness of a lash,” exposing the viewer to “lashes of experiences” that “burn him out, purify him, change him,” until the viewer is left in a state of “ecstasy, admiration, wonder.”²⁶ Similarly, Kelman’s critical survey of the NAC underscores the “passion[ate]” relational dynamic this movement establishes between film and viewer, one capable of “impact[ing]” the viewer’s inner disposition in a manner denied by conventional Hollywood cinema.²⁷ Whereas Hollywood narrative films force the viewer to experience events and insights “vicarious[ly],” Kelman argues, by “making us see things along with (or through) a protagonist with whom we identify, and a plot in which we are caught,” the NAC dispenses with such mediating structures as identification and narrativization in an effort to “project genuine experience and direct vision,” or to present the viewer with a stream of “filmic substance” (light, sound) to be experienced in all its “physical[ity]” and “immediacy.”²⁸

For both of these critics, cinema is thus envisioned as a strangely immediate medium. The filmic image’s association with contingency and the instant made it appear uniquely capable of mirroring the wildness of inner psychical, emotional, and spiritual processes. And the NAC’s decision to affirm this wildness, rather than to contain it in the name of aesthetic coherence, seemed to facilitate a direct, unmediated encounter with these domains. The imagination of film advanced in such statements is highly ideological, based as it is on an intensely naturalized perception of cinematic technology. However, the NAC’s investment in immediacy also cuts in another direction: it designates this movement’s interest in creating a distinctly affective filmic grammar, one capable of impacting the viewer’s outer, bodily sensorium with such intensity that the deeper recesses of her/his inner soul would also be moved. This attempt to enlist cinema’s bodily address into a project of spiritual redemption points to the NAC’s recurrent emphasis on the material dimensions of the soul—an emphasis that resonates in intriguing ways with Arendt’s insistence

on the “body-bound” nature of “soul-experiences,” or the body’s status as a register through which the concrete “language of the soul” gains expression in the form of affective experiences.²⁹ As if seeking to reverse the expressive movement envisioned by Arendt, the NAC sought to dialogue with the soul via this somatic language, endeavoring to resuscitate the former by addressing the body into which the soul’s fluid, chaotic impulses “[do] indeed ‘overflow.’”³⁰

Perhaps more importantly for our purposes, however, such statements on cinematic immediacy also demonstrate how, for Mekas and Kelman, it was only when the intimate artistic products of the NAC were projected to a public audience that cinema revealed its true redemptive potential: its ability to “move our corrupt little minds and hearts” or simply “to refresh us . . .”³¹ The NAC’s inward turn was motivated not only by a deeply felt anxiety about the decline of inner experience, but also by a belief in cinema’s ability to counter this tendency on a potentially mass scale. It was not merely cinema’s usefulness for self-expression but its unique combination of an intimate form and a public mode of address that allowed this seemingly sterile communications technology to assume a new and vital function, becoming the privileged medium through which artists of the NAC sought to create new forums for the cultivation of inner experience. By considering how this ambition gained expression in the NAC’s films, we can better understand its terms and implications.

Toward a Grammar of Filmic Intimacy

Each aspect of this movement’s inward turn—its motivating concern over the decline of interiority, and its outward orientation toward the viewer—informed its aesthetic rebellion. Though frequently phrased as a rejection of form and formal concerns, this rebellion in fact depended on the development of a complex formal vocabulary emphasizing signs of amateurism and contingency as markers of spontaneity, or what we might more accurately describe as carriers of a distinct “immediacy effect” (to paraphrase Roland Barthes). The visual dimensions of this vocabulary are well known: the incorporation of shaky, handheld camerawork, over- and underexposed shots, unconventional framing, and abstract sequences; the use of grainy, black-and-white, 16mm film stock originally intended for newsreels and military surveillance; the blending of fictional sequences involving nonprofessional actors, location shooting, and improvisation with *vérité* footage—all strategies serving what Ricky Leacock described as an effort “to convey the feeling of being there.”³² Yet this production of immediacy also involved important sonic components, including highly innovative experiments with sync sound cameras, forays into pseudo-spontaneous voiceover, and perhaps more significantly, a frequent incorporation of various “impure” and improvisatory musical forms. Indeed, while postwar musical genres such as rock and jazz provided valuable models for filmic improvisation throughout the 1960s, these musical forms became important resources in the NAC’s redemptive project because of their ability to generate intense feelings of vitality and presentness in their audience.

A prime example of this imbrication of sonic and visual strategies can be found in Mekas’s own use of folk songs in his first feature, *Guns of the Trees* (1961), an experimental narrative film that centers on a pair of young couples living in New York City, but which mainly seeks to evoke the more general “atmosphere” of Cold War

America. This atmosphere is figured in the film as a constant and unpredictable oscillation between paranoia and potential, or between the sense of despair inherited by the new generation after the destructive legacy of World War II, and glimpses of the nascent—but still vulnerable—culture of hopefulness this new generation was working to create. The two sides of this conflict are signified visually through the film's juxtaposition of barren cityscapes and white-collar work environments that actively militate against any expression of personality with scenes depicting heartwarming quotidian occurrences, such as spontaneous dance sessions, children skipping, and friends playing in the rain. But this contrast figures sonically as well. For instance, a series of vitriolic poetry interludes spoken in voiceover by Allen Ginsberg portray Cold War America as a terrifying collage of atomic bombs, depthless mass spectacles, environmental destruction, and pervasive government surveillance, though Ginsberg's recitation of a portion of his "Sunflower Sutra" in the closing moments of the film still leaves room for a glimmer of optimism, celebrating the "beautiful golden sunflowers" growing beneath the wreckage of Western modernity in the depths of the human soul. The film's music similarly alternates between a grating, high-pitched, flute-heavy score composed by Lucia Dlugoszewski—which resembles the sound of air raid sirens, evoking the looming threat of nuclear catastrophe—and "warmer" folk songs featuring fiddles and banjos, imperfect guitar picking, and earnestly sung lyrics about birds, crying, and the open seas. Affirming James J. Farrell's observation that the resurgence of folk music in the early 1960s was part of a broader cultural rebellion against "the mechanical modernism of the Atomic Age," *Guns of the Trees* employs folk as a way of gesturing to some "way out" of the dehumanizing confines of Cold War American culture, or of cinematically imagining a simpler, more organic mode of living.³³ Indeed, two separate scenes—one at a bohemian house party, another at a bar—feature folk songs performed by musicians within the diegesis, as if *Guns of the Trees* were attempting to filmically extract folk's intimate cultural cachet, its emphasis on oral tradition and small-scale performances, to convey a fleeting feeling of togetherness to the viewer, one capable of overcoming cinema's inherent separation of profilmic activities from the audience.

Mekas's interest in utilizing folk to produce such intimate effects can be seen quite clearly in this film's most whimsical scene, where Ben (Ben Carruthers) and Argus (Argus Spear Juillard) are found lazing in an overgrown field at the margins of the city as the sun shines down and a rendition of "Little Birdie" plays on the soundtrack. The couple approaches an empty freight car that sits unused at the edge of a rail yard bordering the field. As an amused Argus looks on, Ben begins to play at being a hobo, pouncing into and atop the car as if he were freighthopping. The sense of spontaneity conveyed by Ben's improvised act is amplified by the use of shaky, imprecise camerawork, which lags behind and fails to frame portions of Ben's performance, as well as by the addition of a pair of quick jump cuts that interrupt the action at unexpected moments. These markers of amateur filmmaking are echoed by the rough-hewn quality of the vocals, banjo playing, and fiddle work featured in the song that are riddled with accidental dissonances and traces of materiality (hesitations, the grain of the voice, etc.).

Such technical imperfections generate a rather tangled cluster of responses in the viewer. Along with their vaguely endearing quality, they serve as indices of

bodily presence that seem to “humanize” the highly mechanical processes of film and music production in a manner that resonates with the scene’s bucolic setting, conveying a feeling of reciprocity to the viewer—a sense of being directly involved with the actors and filmmakers responsible for this sequence’s production—that is suggestive of the face-to-face exchanges of premodern communities. Anticipating Kelman’s claim that Hollywood’s repressiveness resulted from its unnecessary addition of layers of artificial mediation, *Guns of the Trees* does not utilize such imperfections to effect a cognitive awareness of cinema’s technological base (as in Brechtian distancing), but to naturalize the filmic apparatus to the point of its disappearance. Providing an illusory sense of involvement with the activities comprising the pro-filmic, amateur imperfections thus function in this film as instances of cinematic excess: traces of contingency that seem to exceed the logic of classical representation. As Mekas knew very well from his experiences as a film critic, encounters with cinematic excess can generate what Paul Willemsen has described as an invigorating, affective “spark” in the viewer trained in conventional modes of cinematic perception, producing the sort of stirring, revelatory experiences that Mekas originally discovered while watching decidedly nonclassical iterations of postwar cinema.³⁴ Indeed, in a 1962 description of *Guns of the Trees*, Mekas explains that the film’s messy aesthetic developed as a conscious effort to create an essentially excessive cinema that would be more conducive to such experiences. By jettisoning conventions of narrative realism and coherence for a disordered, untidy form modeled as an “accumulative emotional fresco,” he hoped to “confront [the viewer], eye to eye, with the soul of modern man.”³⁵ The inclusion of impure sounds and images was thus part of a strategy to force the viewer to encounter the irrational workings of inner experience.

Though created within a decidedly different sociopolitical context, Lionel Rogosin’s feature length docu-fiction, *Come Back, Africa*, utilizes amateur techniques and footage of musical performances to produce a similar feeling of intimacy. Like *Guns of the Trees*, Rogosin’s film exhibits a palpable anxiety about the dehumanizing effects of modernization. Here, however, these effects are localized in the urban spaces of apartheid-era Johannesburg, and the revitalizing force of the human spirit emerges primarily from the dynamic environs of Sophiatown, an impoverished yet culturally vibrant suburb of Johannesburg that was in the process of being razed by the South African government when Rogosin shot his film in 1958.

As a politically charged story of a black migrant worker who moves to the city in search of employment only to suffer the tragic effects of apartheid, *Come Back, Africa* was shot secretly with a small crew, a cast of nonprofessional actors, a loose script, and a rushed production schedule to evade government censorship. Despite these considerable material limitations, however, the film employs specific audiovisual techniques to establish a coherent opposition between life in Johannesburg and Sophiatown. In keeping with Rogosin’s initial impression of Johannesburg as a “ghost city” whose gloomy architecture and “death-like silence” conveyed a sense of impending violence, a recurring series of documentary sequences portray the city as a highly impersonal, inhuman space where alienated masses file to and from work surrounded by rigid, modernist high-rises, eerily unpopulated construction sites,

and broad patches of urban waste and debris. The images are largely seen through observational long shots frequently taken from detached, elevated positions with a static camera, and are often accompanied by the repetitive, mechanical rhythms of drumbeats, though the initially silent architectural sequence that opens the film is suddenly punctuated by the more distressing sound of an alarm bell ringing.³⁶ Sophiatown, on the other hand, is figured as an intensely rich source of energy and community, a haphazardly assembled shantytown whose relative disorder and porosity allows impromptu communal formations—typically mediated by musical performances, whether these occur in the street or in a shebeen frequented by a young Miriam Makeba—to flash up unexpectedly. In contrast to the observational images of Johannesburg, the most extensive documentary sequence depicting life in Sophiatown utilizes footage taken primarily from handheld or mobile cameras positioned at street level, which is edited into highly dynamic sequences that employ multiple short takes and framings that shift between long shots of group activities and closer images of local residents. Ostensibly following the film's protagonist (played by Zacharia Mgabi) and his wife (Vinah Bendile) as they stroll through Sophiatown in search of housing, the camera encounters four separate musical performances in the open streets: a large and highly improvisatory drum and whistle circle, a few men playing horns, a small group of men singing religious hymns, and an expansive wedding party accompanied by musicians with drums and horns. While this sequence's visuals seem to mimic the dynamic, improvisational character of the music featured on the soundtrack, the camera itself seems to respond to the inclusive energy that radiates from these performances, becoming progressively immersed in the groups it documents until it finds itself in the middle of the dance floor at the wedding reception, surrounded by horns, sharply dressed men, and dancing children.

Unlike its silent, ghostly counterpart, Sophiatown held an “almost magical quality” for Rogosin that he associated closely with this suburb's integration of music into daily life.³⁷ In his account of *Come Back, Africa's* production, he discusses how the brass bands, penny whistlers, and singers that he came across when visiting Sophiatown generated a “highly contagious” spirit, or an especially palpable atmosphere of “rapport” whose swirling, affective currents would inevitably fill visitors to this suburb with a vitalizing sense of humanness and fellow-feeling.³⁸ For Rogosin, the highly affective, sympathetic atmosphere produced by such musical performances was inherently political: it allowed outsiders to develop a deeper, more personal understanding of the African people that could cut across artificial barriers such as race and nationality, giving them an embodied experience of the “warmth of life” pervading Sophiatown that could replace distorted representations of African culture.³⁹ Because Rogosin believed that neorealist filmic strategies could provide viewers with a profound feeling of proximity to or involvement with persons and communities depicted on screen, he thus adopted a neorealist style when filming musical performances and daily activities in Sophiatown in an effort to capture the intimate atmosphere of this locale and transmit it in a highly tactile manner to audiences throughout the world, affording them a “sense of direct personal contact” with Sophiatown's invigorating ambience.⁴⁰ “I didn't want the film to be a pure polemic on political terms ‘about’ the wrongs and injustice of apartheid,” Rogosin

writes, “I wanted also a communication of human spirit so that the people on the other side of the barrier could feel emotionally what Africa really is like and not what their particular mentality has created for them—the stereotype image.”⁴¹ As with Mekas’s embrace of excess, Rogosin’s interest in cinema’s immediacy and tactility was predicated on an assumption that such inner, emotional modes of knowledge had fallen into disrepair with the onset of late modernity.

The intimate value attributed to improvisational music also comes through in a number of the NAC’s engagements with jazz, a musical form whose capacity to produce intense sensations of immediacy in both artist and audience afforded it a central role in the movement’s films. While jazz music is thus employed at the level of the soundtrack to convey a sense of modernity in works such as *Shadows*, *Lemon Hearts* (Vernon Zimmerman, 1960), *The Flower Thief* (Ron Rice, 1960), and *The Cool World* (Shirley Clarke, 1963), Bert Stern’s documentary of the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, *Jazz on a Summer’s Day* (1960), utilizes footage of live performances by musicians such as Louis Armstrong and Mahalia Jackson to produce a feeling of directness that Mekas was quick to invest with redemptive potential.⁴² Even Shirley Clarke’s *The Connection* (1961), which departs dramatically from then-fashionable *vérité* conventions, employs footage of jazz performances in a similar manner. Though *The Connection* presents these performances in a thoroughly fictional context, purporting to provide documentation of a group of jazz-musician junkies originally recorded for a documentary about drug addiction, the film’s artificial narrative is continuously interrupted by lengthy sequences of hard bop sessions featuring musicians such as Freddie Redd and Jackie McLean. Generally shot with a roaming camera that slowly glides past or quickly pushes in on the sweaty faces and jumping fingers of such musicians, these musical sequences pierce through the fictional gloss of the *mise-en-scène*, bringing the filmic image’s indexical character to the fore and producing a seemingly direct relationship between film and viewer that denies the voyeuristic distance typically fostered by narrative cinema.

Though also a fictional film, *Pull My Daisy* culminates in a related intra-diegetic jazz session. Based on the third act of an unproduced play written by Jack Kerouac, and featuring performances by Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and Peter Orlovsky, the film depicts a humorous encounter between some drunk poets, a railroad worker named Milo, his wife, and a Bishop in a Manhattan loft, which ends when Milo and a friend suddenly take up horns and begin an impromptu bit of blowing. Extending the Beats’ attempts to produce a spontaneous mode of literary composition modeled on jazz, *Pull My Daisy* seeks to integrate jazz’s improvisational dynamic at the level of film form, utilizing quick, jerky camera movements, imperfect framing, improvised performances, shots of inconsequential objects and details, and a slang-ridden, pseudo-free-form voiceover performed by Kerouac to create what Mekas heralded as a “true cinemadynamics,” or a mode of film practice aimed not only at achieving a direct “contact” with the flux of “immediate experience,” but also at transmitting the tactile “impact” of this experience to the viewer.⁴³ Describing *Pull My Daisy* as a highly affective “portrait of the inner condition of an entire generation,” Mekas conceived the event of viewing this film as a sort of reciprocal play between twin interiorities: the film is said to project, into the viewer’s inmost core, a chaotic audiovisual expression of inner experience itself.⁴⁴

Along with their shared interest in improvised musical forms and performances, films such as *Guns of the Trees*, *Come Back, Africa*, and *Pull My Daisy* also exhibit a problematic affiliation of intimacy with persons of color. Echoing Rogosin's valorization of the "authenticity," "exuberance," and "enjoyment of life" displayed by black South Africans, *Guns of the Trees* frequently contrasts the spontaneous movements, amorous interactions, and carefree attitude of Ben and Argus (both of whom are portrayed by nonwhite actors) with the existential brooding of this couple's white friends.⁴⁵ In contrast, *Pull My Daisy* offers what Parker Tyler once criticized as an uncomfortably "ofay" portrait of bohemianism.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, its celebration of jazz as a means of intimate revolt is part and parcel with the Beats' well-known romanticization of the African American jazz musician as a symbol of intuitive knowledge, sexual energy, psychic union, and social detachment.⁴⁷ In keeping with what Sally Banes has termed the "essentialist positive primitivism" that structured countercultural engagements with race during the 1960s—that is, the assumption that favorable qualities were engendered by race itself and intrinsic to racial minorities, who were often held to be closer to humanity's "natural" condition—nonwhite bodies and cultural practices are located in these films as latent reserves of intimate potential, or natural resources from which the vitality being suffocated by then-dominant white culture could be extracted, harnessed, and transmitted to the viewer with the aid of cinema.⁴⁸ For Banes, this primitivizing tendency reflects the broader "anti-enlightenment triumph of the body over rationality" that held sway in the 1960s' counterculture.⁴⁹ Because the body was affiliated with an inner, irrational mode of knowledge, the surplus embodiment displayed by various racial and ethnic minorities came to be a vital asset in the NAC's redemptive project.

Edward Bland's *The Cry of Jazz* (1959) directly engages this relationship between improvisatory music, immediacy, and race, while also approaching it in a manner that differs from other works affiliated with the NAC. An essay film that was made by a group of African American intellectuals in Chicago, *The Cry of Jazz* was promptly embraced by Mekas as a work of the NAC for its intense "passion" and personal vision.⁵⁰ Bland's film features extensive sequences depicting jazz performances, including rare documentary footage of Sun Ra and his Arkestra playing a score composed by Bland himself.⁵¹ Employing a framing structure that mimics generic conventions of the educational film—a dramatic depiction of a racially charged argument between black and white members of a Chicago jazz club leads to a detailed exposition on the nature of jazz—Bland's work sets out a polemical view of jazz as an authentic cultural expression of the "American Negro."⁵² Though the film does confirm jazz's inherent claim to improvisation and "presentness," Bland also recasts this temporal character as a direct outgrowth of the oppressive living conditions suffered historically by African Americans. Having been stripped of all forms of cultural history and collective memory by slavery and denied any capacity to imagine a viable future by American racism, Bland argues, African Americans created jazz as a means for achieving spiritual transcendence through a "worship of time in its vivid present": "Jazz is a musical expression of the Negro's eternal re-creation in the eternal present."⁵³ The white hipster's turn to jazz in the 1950s is thus viewed by Bland as an instance of cultural appropriation, though *The Cry of Jazz* also discerns a kernel of hope in this appropriation, arguing that white America's

engagement with the vital spirit inherent in jazz might give them access to a form of humanness that they otherwise lack.

Much like Mekas and Korman, Bland also expressed an interest in utilizing film's directness and immediacy to reconfigure the relational dynamic of spectatorship. Throughout the film, the pedagogical voiceover is supplemented by *vérité*-style documentary footage shot in African American communities throughout Chicago, which presents fleeting glimpses of black children and adults playing, walking, conversing, working, shooting pool, and singing—images that seek to embody what the film describes as the spirit of “joy in suffering” that defines jazz. As Bland explains in a statement concerning the aesthetic basis of *The Cry of Jazz*, this footage was central to his construction of the film as a sort of “religious ritual”:

Religious in the sense that everywhere one touches, hears, sees, or feels one encounters the variegatedness of the subject matter while experiencing its identity; and ritualistic in the sense that the musical, visual, and literary operations would so cohere as to create a particular pantheon of values expressive of the essence of the being and becoming of the American Negro.⁵⁴

Bland's emphasis on the tactile and emotional character of this audiovisual encounter, as well as his investment in film's ability to transmit the “essence” of African Americans' spiritual struggles to the viewer, demonstrates significant overlaps between *The Cry of Jazz*'s guiding project and the redemptive ambitions of the NAC. Yet Bland's subordination of the film's documentary footage to its thesis, a decision that stemmed from his belief in the necessity of linguistically anchoring the polysemic character of the filmic image to avoid misinterpretation, also indicates the considerable distance existing between the pedagogical thrust of *The Cry of Jazz* and the valorization of irrationality exhibited by a film like *Pull My Daisy*. For Bland, the jazz musician's “worship of the vividness of the present moment” was said to fulfill a vital function for African Americans of the postwar era, allowing them to temporarily regain the freedom of soul they had been denied by American racism. Yet *The Cry of Jazz* ultimately casts improvisatory immediacy as an imperfect mode of cultural resistance. Because improvisation holds no future orientation, the film argues, it is merely a holding action and is of no use in effecting the wide-scale social transformation demanded by the inhuman conditions of late-modern America.

Between Presentness and Pedagogy

I end with this note on the role of pedagogy in *The Cry of Jazz* because I think this film's attention to the shortcomings of presentness offers an important corrective to the revolutionary claims that came to structure the NAC's redemptive project. As has been shown, Mekas believed that this movement's personal films were capable of transforming the underlying spiritual composition of the individual viewer. And it was his hope that this transformation would cause the viewer to alter her/his activities and beliefs, forcing this viewer to encounter the essential “goodness” of humanity in a manner that would lead her/him to thereby reject the immorality and ugliness of postwar American society and pursue a more beautiful mode of living.⁵⁵

Yet the connection between these two moments—one's encounter with inner experience, and one's decision to act in a more moral way—was not theorized by Mekas during his initial formulation of the NAC's redemptive project. Which is to say, because Mekas conceived inner experience as fundamentally disorganized, irrational, anarchical, and even "stupid," his theorization of this project could not account for the way in which an intimate encounter with the spirit of "idiocy" embodied by the NAC's films might provide viewers with a more truthful moral framework through which to navigate their subsequent engagements with the world.⁵⁶

Over the course of the 1960s, Mekas would increasingly attempt to account for this oversight through intermittent inquiries into the importance of form, which would eventually lead him to emphasize the moral function of aesthetic organization, and to critique amateur art for its distinctly debilitating effects—a shift in his critical position that occurred more-or-less contemporaneously with the displacement of the Beats' anti-aesthetic by the calculated orderings of structural film. In a "Movie Journal" column on the films of Ken Jacobs published on July 17, 1969, for instance, Mekas states this newfound investment in form rather bluntly: "in art nothing else matters besides form."⁵⁷ These later analyses of form reiterate, in a modified version, Mekas's earlier investment in the transformative power of cinema, arguing that artworks with a clearly ordered form—where form is defined as "that radiance from within, to which a shape attains when in a given situation it realizes itself completely"—have the capacity to "transform [us] into...better human being[s]" by "get[ting] very directly to us, and mak[ing] us more radiant," or "produc[ing] in us the states and forms of radiance" that "help to sustain man, spiritually, like bread does, like rain does, like rivers, like mountains, like sun."⁵⁸ Yet in this naturalized conception of film practice, the productive function of art, its ability to directly produce the radiant forms of inner experience ("that radiance from *within*") in the depths of a viewer's spirit, is given a distinct "shape," order, and coherence ("All confusing matters eliminated")—in short, a logic.⁵⁹

In its essence, Mekas's valorization of form's radiant power can be seen as an attempt to put forward a newly formalist iteration of the NAC's redemptive project. And the basic logic he comes to attribute to form might be understood as filling the aforementioned theoretical void in his earlier writings, in that the particular "shape" of form's radiant power here provides the viewer with something like a moral code or directive: a sensory orientation toward "happiness" that prevents one from living a life that is in conflict with "beauty and truth."⁶⁰ Indeed, in this same column, Mekas even refutes new criticisms of the American avant-garde voiced by members of the New Left who rejected the "apolitical" character of Jacobs's newly formalist works in the wake of May 1968, by asserting that—as "manifestoes of the politics of truth and beauty," a politics that "mean[s] no harm"—Jacobs's films "belong to the strongest political statements made by anybody working in cinema today."⁶¹ However, Mekas's movement toward a pleasant, harmless political art and away from his earlier interest in the violent, defamiliarizing intensity of avant-garde cinema seems to have been accompanied by a decline in his capacity to conceive anything like political action.⁶² As he explains in an earlier "Movie Journal" entry: "The only action, besides love, that one can take...is...to increase [man's] knowledge of himself so

that he wouldn't do anything that is against himself—because to do harm to others is to do harm to yourself.”⁶³ Published on September 26, 1968, Mekas's rejection of “action” and conflict here was most certainly at odds with the New Left's novel approach to political radicalism, which—as Michael Renov has argued—departed from the Popular Front's goals of base-building and unification by seeking “the intensification of social contradiction to the point of rupture,” rather than clean solutions to political problems.⁶⁴ In this sense, Mekas's valorization of form at the end of the 1960s, and the life-affirming, spiritual reveries that accompany an encounter with the “pleasant currents” of affective energy emitted by well-ordered artworks, would seem to offer a poignant example of what Marcuse referred to as the ultimately harmless, easily containable efforts to liberate the human sensibility as a wholly “private factor,” rather than “as a force for transformation of human existence and of its environment.”⁶⁵

For Marcuse, the revitalizing function assumed by radical aesthetics within the context of the affluent society—art's drive to reach and revitalize human interiority—was positioned as the initial stage in a more long-term project of world transformation, one that art could never achieve on its own.⁶⁶ According to him, the process of carrying out such a project always “remains the task of political action” where “the artist participates *not as artist*.”⁶⁷ As a means for moving from one stage of this radical project to the other, Marcuse placed a crucial emphasis on pedagogy, or more precisely, on a form of education that “must involve the mind *and* the body, reason *and* imagination, the intellectual *and* the instinctual needs.”⁶⁸ It was his belief that such a form of education would be capable of acknowledging late capitalism's development of a mode of “social engineering” capable of dominating all previously private realms of human experience, while still insisting on the indispensable role of reason in providing such inherently unstructured experiences with a specific—and specifically political—rationality: namely, “the reconstruction of the polis.”⁶⁹ To the extent that the NAC's attempt to redeem interiority refused to direct or orient the latter toward such a world-transformative practice, its desire to create a cinema of “luminous colors and heavenly sounds” that would “change our cities, our faces, our movements, our voices, [and] our souls” could only ever be incomplete.⁷⁰

Notes

1. Herbert Marcuse, “Liberation from the Affluent Society,” in *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume Three: The New Left and the 1960s*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 2005).
2. For more on this congress, see David Cooper, ed., *To Free a Generation: The Dialectics of Liberation* (New York: Collier, 1969).
3. Marcuse, “Liberation,” 81. For more on his understanding of the “biological” register of these needs, see Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1969) 10, n. 1.
4. Marcuse, “Liberation,” 82, 81.
5. See, for instance: David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950); C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951); William H. Whyte Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956);

- Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), esp. pp. 38–40, 57–59.
6. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1991), 10, 26.
 7. Jonas Mekas, "Cinema of the New Generation," *Film Culture* 21 (Summer, 1960): 19.
 8. See Jonas Mekas, "New York Letter: Towards a Spontaneous Cinema," *Sight and Sound* 28 no. 3–4 (Summer–Autumn, 1959); Mekas, "A Call for a New Generation of Film-Makers," in *Film Culture Reader*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000); Mekas, "Cinema"; and Mekas, *Movie Journal: The Rise of the New American Cinema, 1959–1972* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).
 9. Mekas, "A Call," 75. See also Mekas, *Movie Journal* 1.
 10. "The First Statement of the New American Cinema Group," in *Film Culture Reader*, 81, 80, 83.
 11. See: Gregory Battcock, "Introduction," in *The New American Cinema: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1967); Melinda Ward and Bruce Jenkins, "Introduction," in *The American New Wave, 1958–1967*, ed. Melinda Ward and Bruce Jenkins (Buffalo, NY: Walker Art Center, 1982); David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), esp. 85–87; and Juan A. Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, and Superstars: Avant-Garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960s Underground Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), esp. 73–81.
 12. Annette Michelson, "Film and the Radical Aspiration," in *Film Culture Reader*, 416.
 13. Ken Kelman, "Anticipations of the Light," in *The New American Cinema*, 24; Mekas, "Cinema," 19. See also: Mekas, "Notes on the New American Cinema," in *Film Culture Reader*, 103–107; "First Statement," 81; and Mekas, "Movie Journal," *Village Voice*, March 30, 1960, 16.
 14. Mekas, "Notes," 91; Mekas, "Cinema," 19.
 15. Mekas, "Cinema," 19.
 16. Stan Vanderbeek, "The Cinema Delimina: Films from the Underground," *Film Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (Summer, 1961): 6; Brakhage quoted in Mekas, "Notes," 103; Ron Rice, "Ron Rice: Diaries, Notebooks, Documents," *Film Culture* 39 (Winter, 1965): 113; Allen Ginsberg, "America's Nervous Breakdown: Poetry, Violence, and the Trembling Lambs," *Village Voice*, August 25, 1959: 1, 8.
 17. Mekas, "Notes," 103.
 18. For early criticisms, see especially: Eduoard de Laurot, "The Future of the New American Cinema," *Film Culture* 24 (Spring, 1962); and Louis Marcorelles's comments in "What is the New Cinema? [Two Views—Paris and New York]," *Film Culture* 42 (Fall, 1966), esp. 59–60. A more recent critique of the NAC from the perspective of postmodern criticism can be found in Suárez, *Bike Boys*, esp. xiii, xvi–xvii, 73–110.
 19. Deborah Nelson, *Pursuing Privacy in Cold War America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), xii.
 20. Nelson, *Pursuing Privacy*, xiii.
 21. Nelson, *Pursuing Privacy*, xiii, 9.
 22. Nelson refers to this as the "governing paradox" of the Cold War (*Pursuing Privacy*, xiii). For related analyses of suburban domesticity during this period, see: Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003), esp. ch. 2; Beatriz Colomina, *Domesticity at War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2007); and Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

23. See Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, esp. xlvii, 10; Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1966), esp. ch. 13; and Arendt, *Human Condition*, esp. ch. 2.
24. Nelson, *Pursuing Privacy*, 29.
25. Julia Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis, Vol. 2*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 43.
26. Mekas, "Movie Journal," *Village Voice*, December 17, 1958, 8; Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 47; Mekas, "Movie Journal," *Village Voice*, July 1, 1959: 6, 11.
27. Kelman, "Anticipations," 24, 28.
28. Kelman, "Anticipations," 24–25, 28.
29. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt, 1977), 32, 33.
30. Arendt, *The Life*, 33.
31. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 64; Kelman, "Anticipations," 25.
32. Quoted in Mekas, "Notes," 93.
33. James J. Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties: Making Postwar Radicalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 73.
34. Willemen describes this experience as a mode of cinephilic pleasure in *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 235–242.
35. Mekas, "Notes," 97.
36. Lionel Rogosin, *Come Back, Africa: Lionel Rogosin—A Man Possessed* (Johannesburg, South Africa: STE 2004), 22.
37. Rogosin, *Come Back*, 33.
38. Rogosin, *Come Back*, 34, 36.
39. Rogosin, *Come Back*, 29.
40. Rogosin, *Come Back*, 59.
41. Rogosin, *Come Back*, 34.
42. See Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 15–16.
43. Mekas, "Cinema," 14, 13, 17.
44. Mekas, "Cinema," 14.
45. Rogosin, *Come Back*, 23, 24, 33.
46. Parker Tyler, "For *Shadows*, Against *Pull My Daisy*," in *Film Culture Reader*, 111.
47. James discusses this aspect of Beat culture in *Allegories*, 96–98.
48. Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 206.
49. Banes, *Greenwich Village*, 206.
50. Mekas, "New York," 121.
51. Edward Bland, "On 'The Cry of Jazz,'" *Film Culture* 21 (Summer, 1960), 31.
52. Bland, "Cry of Jazz," 30.
53. Bland, "Cry of Jazz," 29.
54. Bland, "Cry of Jazz," 31.
55. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 131.
56. On stupidity, see: Mekas, "Notes," 92; *Movie Journal*, 63–65.
57. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 351.
58. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 351–52. Mekas attributes this definition to Bernard Berenson.
59. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 351.
60. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 351–52. For a related discussion of happiness, see Mekas, "Notes on Some New Movies and Happiness," in *Film Culture Reader*.
61. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 351–52.
62. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 1.

63. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 323.
64. Michael Renov, "Newsreel: Old and New. Towards an Historical Profile," *Film Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Autumn, 1987): 22.
65. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 309; Marcuse, "Liberation," 82.
66. Marcuse, "Liberation," 81.
67. Marcuse, "Art in the One-Dimensional Society," in *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume Four: Art and Liberation*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 2007), 122.
68. Marcuse, "Liberation," 85.
69. Marcuse, "Art in the One-Dimensional Society," 122.
70. Mekas, "Where Are We—the Underground," in *The New American Cinema*, 21.

CHAPTER 5

Utopia and Dystopia in Science Fiction Films around 1968

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By the beginning of the 1960s, the blind faith in technological and economic progress that had evolved since the end of World War II had begun to fade; a key role in this shift was played by the escalating confrontation between East and West—with its attendant risk of nuclear war—as well as by the first indices of environmental damage exacerbated by an ever-expanding consumer culture. By the end of the decade, youth protests in Western countries helped foster a general cultural shift in the climate of postindustrial societies, with rebellious young people embracing skeptical and sometimes pessimistic attitudes toward reigning ideas of ever-evolving technological and economic progress. At the same time, youth culture embraced utopian alternatives, even as the specters of nuclear war and ecological dystopia continued to loom. These utopian and dystopian visions are mirrored with startling clarity in the films of the era, above all in the science fiction film, a genre that reflected, in a striking fashion, ambiguous attitudes toward civilization in general, and the utopian possibilities of technology in particular.

Science fiction has always reflected technological and scientific developments in society, and especially what consequences these developments might have for humanity. Extrapolating from current trends to posit futures by turns beatific or nightmarish, science fiction connects directly with deep questions of human progress and survival. Science fiction refers to these utopian and dystopian visions primarily on a phenomenological level, presenting huge cities with futuristic architecture, complex settings of space ships or biomechanical androids with humanoid behavior. These devices, as Vivienne Sobchack has pointed out, represent narrative reflections of collective emotions concerning possible human futures. The “deepest interest [of the science fiction film],” argues Sobchack, “is in how science and technology subjectively transform our experience and imagination and thus affect our daily lives in a variety of meaningful ways.”¹ For this reason, science fiction films always sensitively

register the collective emotions and attitudes of their time; in the 1960s, science fiction films such as Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville*, François Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451*, and Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, embodied both utopian and dystopian visions against a backdrop of social unrest and cultural crisis.

This chapter will scrutinize how single science fiction movies around 1968 perform such visions and attitudes typical for this era. A special focus will be on the metaphoric representation of such perspectives. Thereby I will refer to the approach to cognitive metaphors developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Accordingly, metaphors are cognitive schemata in our brains that help us to imagine abstract, complex, and "invisible" ideas and concepts with the help of embodied experiences and knowledge. As I have argued elsewhere,² such metaphorical thinking is widely used by filmmakers, be it intuitively or explicitly, in order to give ideologies and culturally based semantics an audiovisual gestalt that might be grasped by viewers already in a prereflexive and bodily manner.

The Science Fiction Film and "1968"

A common experience that united youth in most Western countries during the 1960s was the deep gap between high standards of economic welfare, growing consumer culture, and related individual wealth on the one side and social and cultural apathy on the other. This gap was rooted in established authoritarian and hierarchical structures in politics, at work, and in the family. The "baby boom" in many Western countries had sharpened the social antagonism between the conservative adherence of the older generation to materialist and hierarchical values and norms and a hedonistic younger generation, growing up in prosperity and looking instead for self-fulfillment.³ Instead of assimilating to the reigning hierarchical structures in families, society, and state, countercultural youth fought for intellectual, emotional, and sexual self-fulfillment. Individuality, creativity, and spontaneity were the guiding values of this postmaterialistic attitude to life.

This general discontent and skepticism was nourished by the philosophies and ideologies of Marxist, antiauthoritarian, and anarchist authors. They have also been the ground for more fundamental utopian and dystopian visions of future societies. In Europe, student revolts were both influenced by antiauthoritarian ideas of the New Left⁴ and by actionist concepts of the artistic avant-garde and the Situationist International, initiated in France by Guy Debord.⁵ In combining these two frameworks, the German student movement has been particularly influential, for example, in France and in the United States. Prominent German activists such as Rudi Dutschke, Dieter Kunzelmann, and Bernd Rabehl were members of the Situationist International, a group of anarchist artists, architects, and philosophers, which advocated for a radical abolishment of capitalist and consumerist orientations.⁶ Like philosophical cultural critics such as Herbert Marcuse, Theodor W. Adorno, or Max Horkheimer, they were convinced that capitalism produced artificial needs in people that hindered the development of authentic needs and wishes.

Herbert Marcuse, one of the most relevant proponents of antiauthoritarian ideas, skeptically analyzed the growing conformity of both individuals and culture

in advanced industrial countries. His description of the “one-dimensional man” characterized the deep unease and discontent of the younger generation, who felt oppressed by preestablished social and political structures that demanded they wholeheartedly adapt to them, leaving no room for individual creativity and self-expression. As a result of this dominant instrumental rationality, expressed in the reigning technological, scientific, and economic logics, Marcuse observed the rise of a new mode of thought and behavior in Western cultures, based on “the repression of values, aspirations, and ideas that cannot be defined in terms of the operations and attitudes validated by the prevailing forms of rationality. The consequence is the weakening and disappearance of all genuinely radical critique, the integration of all opposition in the established system.”⁷

Especially with regard to Left-wing dystopia, Marcuse’s considerations of a “technological society” have been most influential. In his analysis, he described the long-lasting effects and influences of technology on the organization of labor and of social life, resulting in a growing adaption of thinking, behavior, and culture itself to instrumental rationality. He even outlined a vision of a totalitarian system of social control and domination, established by and realized with the help of new technologies. Similarly to the way Michel Foucault would analyze it some years later,⁸ he considered a long tradition in the development and differentiation of technologies in the history of bourgeois societies that were used to control individuals not only physically, but, and even more so, mentally and affectively. To a much larger degree, in “late capitalism” people would have to submit to the demands of increased administration and technologically established infrastructure of labor, communication, and everyday life that all required standardized forms of behavior. For Marcuse, these “mechanics of conformity”⁹ are characterized first of all by the reigning principle of efficiency.

The totalitarian effect of a technological society in which, at the same time, technologies are welcomed by people as easing everyday life and offering new possibilities for communication and consumerism is described by Marcuse as a “comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom.”¹⁰ This pessimistic view was shared by Adorno and Horkheimer, two more authors who influenced the ideas of the New Left. They observed a structural manipulation of individual and collective needs by the culture industry and its permanently differentiated offerings in the marketplace. What they called the “cycle of manipulation and retroactive need”¹¹ was at the center of dystopian visions of the New Left around 1968: the vision that, in capitalist societies, people are all the more delivered to the manipulation of the economic–technological complex as they inherently and mentally adapt to its rules and mechanisms due to the satisfaction of pseudo-needs. While “individuality,” original experience and freedom are guidelines in consumer culture, they are, following Adorno/Horkheimer, only keys to individual and collective needs of the consumers. They control and influence them in order to keep on running economic rules. Accordingly, individuality and freedom of choice are described as illusionary feelings that people experience when entering the economic cycles of needs. Instead, they argue, they serve as instrumental functions of powerful actors in technological and consumerist society.¹²

Instead of taking these diagnoses for granted, however, philosophers, students, artists, and activists close to the New Left developed revolutionary and utopian ideas of escaping these circles of suppression. On the one hand, the political groups—mostly centered on the universities—followed Marxist and socialist utopias of egalitarian societies in which political and economic power is distributed among citizens.¹³ On the other hand, these political utopias were also contested in the New Left by antiauthoritarian ideas and practices that expanded the idea of a social revolution to include ways of living together, communication, and the (dis-)organization of social bonds. Marcuse, as one of the most relevant antiauthoritarian thinkers, articulated the alternatives and possibilities for modern societies to build new communities of autonomous and emancipated individuals. In the center of such a reorganization was the liberation from bourgeois family structures. In communes and other new forms of living, young people, too, experimented with alternative ways of living together.

Furthermore, the antiauthoritarian movement aimed to produce open “situations” within their public protest actions that made people aware of their voluntary commitment to capitalist culture and encouraged them to experience the power of individuality, spontaneity, and creativity. Yet, radical Situationists such as Debord rejected every form of political activism, avoiding further consumerist “spectacles” that distanced people from experiencing the power of their own creativity. Despite Debord’s skepticism, revolting students in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere used Situationist techniques like happenings and guerrilla communication to create new forms of politically motivated protest actions. Both radical Situationists and their political adaptors followed the utopian idea that such public practices might help people liberate themselves from oppressive structures and thereby enhance the development of a peaceful society of “free” individuals. Many more such utopian and dystopian visions and tendencies around 1968 could be mentioned here, and some will, indeed, be picked up later. Already, however, this short sketch of the divergent attitudes reflecting the accelerated modernization of Western societies, pushed forward by the economic upswing and rapid technological progress during the 1960s, demonstrates that both optimistic and pessimistic perspectives, as well as utopian and dystopian visions of the future, were closely linked together at this time.

Within and across social milieus and between groups and actors articulating their hopes and fears regarding the development of postindustrial societies, there was a flow of skeptical and revolutionary ideas, which has been promoted significantly by the mass media. Oppositional discourses on the dialectical dynamics of capitalist societies and revolutionary counter-concepts were discussed at the universities. Characteristic issues were articulated by prominent actors of the student movement, such as Rudi Dutschke in Germany, and expressed in symbolic protest performances as well as in public representations of new ways of living. Through media coverage of the protest events and activists highlighting the new values, habits, and expressive forms of rebellious youth, some of the general ideas of the New Left entered the broader public.¹⁴ Additionally, entertainment media, and especially science-fictional genres in television and cinema, have been another mass media reflection.

Science fiction films responded to the general utopian and dystopian visions of the youth in revolt, melding them with collective emotions around 1968 and thereby transcending a strictly oppositional counterculture. As Brian Stableford observes of the augmented relevance of emotional perspectives in his sociology of science fiction in the 1960s: "The imaginary worlds that emerged to become characteristic of science fiction of the sixties had to be worlds which facilitated the new kind of stereotyped resolutions. They had to be worlds which, by their very nature, permitted and validated eupsychian perspectives and psychic adaptations."¹⁵

According to the ambivalent perspectives and affective responses to the prospective promises of modernization in the 1960s, we may observe in science fiction films at this time two general tendencies: On the one hand, films that created imaginary future worlds in which men and technology coexist and interact in harmony. The television series *Star Trek* (USA 1966–1969), Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (USA 1968),¹⁶ or Roger Vadim's film *Barbarella* (F/I 1968) built sophisticated technological universes that comfortably serve men in realizing ambitious scientific or political ideas and projects. Machines are presented here (positively) as extensions of human mind and body, allowing men to transcend the limits of their natural capacities.¹⁷ Consequently, those rather-utopian films mostly placed their stories in outer space, using it as a spatial metaphor for the successful transcendence of humanity by technology. Given the historic landing on the moon in 1969, those science fiction stories picked up euphoric emotions related to the pioneering realization of an old human dream and inspired many utopian visions of the time.

Utopian spaces in these films were characterized by a techno-sensorial design that also communicated the idea of biomechanical extensions of man. Most prominently, the high-tech design of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, with its biomorphic plastic furniture indicates a close adaption of technology to the human body. In *Barbarella*, the artificial bioesthetics melts with the erotic performance of Jane Fonda.¹⁸ As a cyber-amazon on her mission for love, she ironically refers to hippie-counterculture, fighting for society, living in peace and harmony. The technological tools, presented in a rather low-tech style, served to support her on this mission.

While these films mostly imagined external worlds, outer space dystopian science fiction films made around 1968, on the other hand, focused more on prospective visions about the way current reality might develop soon on Earth. Therefore, they directly addressed fearful apprehensions concerning everyday life in a society dominated by the instrumental rationality of technology, science, and capitalist efficiency. Popular examples are Godard's *Alphaville: Une Étrange Aventure de Lemmy Caution* (F 1965), George Lucas's *THX 1138* (USA 1971), and François Truffaut's cinematic adaptation of *Fahrenheit 451* (UK 1966). The scenarios of such dystopian films often resembled the critical considerations of Marcuse or Adorno and Horkheimer about the alienation of men in a totalitarian system controlled by technology and the culture industry.

As Chris Darke observes for science fiction in the 1960s: "With science fiction's focus shifting away from depicting other worlds in outer space towards otherness of life on earth it was well placed to accommodate the fears that were coalescing at the same moment: fears of automation and atomic destruction, of consumerism and standardisation."¹⁹

Alphaville, for example, plays off the modern architecture of Paris in the administrative district of La Defense and completely disclaims fantastic film settings and visual effects. In envisioning its near future, it depicts an imaginary world familiar to viewers while at the same time making visible the alienating qualities of the modern world as it is. Thereby, Godard addresses the anxieties and uneasiness of many people, especially in the skeptical and rebellious younger generation, toward the uniformity of life in a society dominated by instrumental and “efficient” rationality.²⁰ Godard characterized his attitude thusly: “I didn’t imagine society in twenty years from now as [H.G.] Wells did. On the contrary, I’m telling the story of a man from twenty years ago who discovers the world today and can’t believe it.”²¹

In *Fahrenheit 451*, Truffaut realized a similar approach. Based on Ray Bradbury’s 1951 novel, the film also tells the story of a totalitarian society in the near future in which citizens must submit to a hedonist governance, forcing them to live an affirmative and passive way of life. Critical thinking and debating is forbidden in this world; books are strictly banned and citizens are only allowed to receive entertaining and affirmative media, which are omnipresent. *Fahrenheit 451* seems to almost directly refer to the critical theories of thinkers such as Marcuse and Adorno/Horkheimer, warning of the long-term consequences of a consumerism that manipulates people mentally and emotionally through the very act of addressing their needs. In all of these dystopian films, men and machines are presented in a close but threatening interrelationship. Technological and economic systems dominate human behavior, feeling, and thinking, and are performed by despotic forces aiming to suppress or even destroy mankind.

Embodied Metaphors in Moving Images

Metaphor, as Peter Stockwell has pointed out, is central to the poetics of science fiction.²² The spaces, the characters, the objects, and their appearances have to be conceptualized on the basis of envisioned concepts of the future. Hence the manifestation of abstract ideas in pictures and sound is generally a metaphoric process.²³ This is all the more true if we consider metaphors not only as analogies and symbols, but as a cognitive mechanism to imagine abstract and complex concepts by giving them a concrete gestalt for our senses. In their theory on cognitive metaphors, George Lakoff²⁴ and Mark Johnson²⁵ show how much our perception and our thinking are marked by presymbolic, sensorial, and physical experiences. According to them, we permanently activate image schemata and gestalt structures that genuinely rely on bodily experience. The meaning of *balance*, for example, emerges for Johnson from the “bodily experience in which we orient ourselves within our environment. These experiences involve image schemata that are the basis for the meaning of balance.”²⁶ Similarly, both the meaning and the gestalt of *force* are based on bodily experiences and are the basis for metaphorical projections. Cognitive metaphors are therefore considered by Johnson “as a matter of projections and mappings across different domains in actual structuring of our experiences.”²⁷

Consequently, symbolic metaphors in language and in pictures produce, on the one hand, a comparison between two different conventional signs. The expression “predatory capitalism,” for example, is built on the comparison between the words

“capitalism” and “predator” as a forceful agent. On the other hand, symbolic metaphors further possess a presymbolic, embodied dimension, referring to metaphoric schemata that are rooted in our brains. They are produced in our minds by structural mappings between embodied image schemata as *source domains* and abstract or complex concepts as target domains, such as processes, emotions, and complex states. The conventional metaphor “predatory capitalism,” for example, is built on the cognitive mapping “capitalism is a predator.” This mapping is based in our thinking on a hierarchy of differently complex metaphoric schemata, such as “capitalism is a natural force,” “capitalism is a living being,” and “capitalism is a predator.” The widely abstract socioeconomic system of capitalism is thus given the gestalt of a forceful predator. The target domain concerns in this case also the radical effects of capitalist economics and the related collective fears in a society organized under such principles. Qualities of a predator that are anthropologically anchored in our cognition, like its physical superiority and its aggression are mapped onto the capitalist behavior of individual economic elites and the corresponding anxiety surrounding the destruction of social communities. These gestalt qualities and cognitive attributions all rely on the embodied schema of “force” that is related in our minds with diverse multisensorial experiences and associations. Other embodied image schemata that are used in cognitive metaphors are, for example, the path-schema (‘here-there’) or the container-schema (‘in-out’), which both structure our spatial orientation.

Films may use the gestalt of embodied image schemata in cognitive metaphors even more directly than language. This is especially true for their general topographic structure: spatial structures such as up-down, in-out, and foreground-background that are the basis for our spatial orientation can be related metaphorically to cultural or narrative meanings such as:

- up is good—down is bad
- up is power—down is weak
- friends are in—enemies are out

Audiovisual spaces activate such basic metaphors in the viewer’s mind reflexively, on a low level of perception that mostly remains unnoticed consciously. Additionally, filmmakers might also refer to them intuitively or even explicitly and willingly.²⁸ Therefore, they also use cognitive concepts that are linked to mental images and image schemata, such as “city,” “castle,” “machine,” or “river.” Such concepts that imply mental images are another fundamental aspect of spatial metaphors in moving images. Since they include cultural knowledge, they offer rich cognitive material for concretizing visually and acoustically abstract concepts such as “society,” “life,” “death,” or “time” as target domains.

Abstract dystopia are performed in science fiction films synesthetically and sensorially by referring to embodied metaphors. Buildings and machines are often used here to visualize a dystopian vision of future Western societies.²⁹ An early and classic example is the film *Metropolis* from Fritz Lang (D 1927). The inner space of the gigantic factory is not only represented as an engine room; it is rather represented as a machine of which man is a part, being completely dominated by a huge technological system that he has only to serve.

The metaphorical quality of this setting goes far beyond symbolic analogies that have often been analyzed in this film: While these analyses mostly focus on the metaphorical *comparison* between men and machine in *Metropolis*, they widely concentrate on the level of cultural knowledge. At the same time, the machine-metaphor has an embodied dimension that allows the viewer to anticipate the alienating and dehumanizing effects of the capitalist system described in the film bodily and affectively. While the reigning system is metaphorically represented as a huge machine, the mechanical and automatic performance of the workers indicates that they are part of it. Hence, besides the architecture and the topological arrangement of the film, the movements of the workers, their emotional expressions, and their body language perform their suffering under a spatially and physically present social superiority. Consequently, the structural mapping between the “capitalist system” as a target domain and the “machine” as a source domain is the foundation of a metaphorical conceptualization of filmic space and body performances throughout the whole movie on several dimensions: It is the basis for the selection of spatial motifs, the architectural settings, and for the conceptualization of bodily centered emotional scenarios that can be experienced by the viewers already on the level of gestalt perception. As a result, viewers may experience the metaphorical conceptualization “a capitalist society is a machine” not only on the level of our cultural knowledge but also may anticipate it already with their own bodies.³⁰

Machine-Metaphors in Science Fiction Films around 1968

Around 1968, science fiction films often used metaphoric gestalts to communicate their utopian or dystopian visions cognitively, emotionally, and bodily. In doing so, they could profit from advancements in cinematic technologies and enhanced illusionary effects in the production of movies and in their projection. Along with these developments, including visual and acoustic effects, techniques to address viewers’ senses have been further optimized. This, in turn, suggested enhanced possibilities for filmmakers to effectively deploy metaphoric gestalts in picture and sound in order to make the audience physically experience their imaginative worlds. Of course, this was also the case for many filmmakers presenting dystopian visions of a future dominated by mind-controlling technologies.

Science fiction films around 1968 often put a machine or a computer at the center of their narratives, a representation of a mechanized social system or even the reigning power of a social order dominated by instrumental rationality. Some of the most prominent examples are the onboard computer HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*; the omnipresent *Alpha 60* in *Alphaville*, which exerts a totalitarian control over people; or the machine *Om*, which acts as a divine force for the subordinate human beings in the technocratic dictatorship of *THX 1138*. These machines do not only serve as visual representatives of a future social system, but are also presented as human-like protagonists to whom the viewers can respond emotionally and thereby respond implicitly to the abstract (technological, economic, etc.) system they represent. These machine-performances refer to several cognitive and emotional metaphors at the same time.

All three of these films relate their audiovisual creation of machine-protagonists to two cognitively rooted metaphoric schemata: “A social system is a machine” and “Power is a machine.” Significant for metaphorical semantics is the attribution of cold, automatic acting to social order and control. On the one hand, the machines are given a concrete visual gestalt that underlines their machinic character: *HAL* is a huge computer, consisting of many hard disks combined in a metallic chassis, and of several cameras, located at many places of the spaceship. The mechanical character of *Alpha 60* is (ironically) represented as a blowing fan and little loudspeakers on desks, all animated by the sound of a distorted voice. And in *THX 1138*, citizens meet their divine force *Om* in little cells, where they sit in front of a large, illuminated picture of a Jesus-like figure, which talks to them in a soft, but automatic voice originating from a tape located in a distant studio. On the other hand, the mechanical gestalts of these machine-protagonists are combined metaphorically with human-like attributes in picture and sound. Their anthropomorphic performance refers to basic emotion metaphors of FEAR and LOVE, which I will analyze more closely below.

The Caring Machine: The LOVE-Metaphor

A key filmic strategy for imbuing a fantastic or nonliving object with the impression of being human-like is to provide it with affective or emotional characteristics. As mentioned above, the emotional attribution of machines and computers had a sociocultural function in the context of science fiction films around 1968. One way to offer their public emotional attitudes for coping with fears about a prospective prevalence of technology and instrumental rationality in the future was to present this future metaphorically as a “caring machine”: technology, then, not only serves humans to realize mankind’s ambitious ideas, but also acts as social partners in daily life. The audiovisual performances of such humanoid machine-protagonists often referred to cognitively anchored Love-Metaphors. In his empirical study on metaphors of emotion in everyday language, linguist Zoltan Kövecses mentions as some of the most pervasive ones:³¹

- Love Is a Physical Force (e.g., “to be magnetically drawn by someone”)
- Love Is Closeness (e.g., “to be very close with someone”)
- Love Is Magic (e.g., “to be enchanted”)
- Love Is Social Superior (e.g., “to be completely ruled by love”)

HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey* is ostensibly merely a computer and hence a purely mechanical object. At the same time, however, it has many characteristics of a human, emotional being. It is presented as a social partner of the two astronauts, accompanying them in their daily life on board the spaceship. Its affective attitude toward Frank Poole and David Bowman resembles the loving care of parents toward their children, although they do not return this emotional attention. On the contrary, the two men do not show any emotions, continuing to act with strict rationality, even in extreme danger. While humans act here like machines,

having internalized mechanic logics and rationality, the machines appear all the more affective and human.³²

The divergent ontological categories of “human” and “machine,” “mechanical” and “affective” are transgressed in many ways. In the audiovisual gestalt of *HAL*, they are convincingly merged by referring to the cognitive Love-metaphors. The lenses of its omnipresent cameras are shown as moving (when adjusting) red “eyes” that are addressed by the astronauts by view when they speak to it. Therefore, man-machine interactions are “naturalized” and the humanoid character of the computer gains believability by the response of the human characters. Most significant for this emotional appearance of the machine is *HAL*’s voice: it has a quiet and soft timbre that establishes an affective closeness to the astronauts. This closeness is associated with a caring, and—in a wider sense—loving attitude toward the two men that is manifest when *HAL* asks carefully for their feelings and thoughts, or when he tenderly wishes a “happy birthday” to Dave. The metaphor “love is closeness” is further performed in the audiovisual gestalt of *HAL*. Its warm and soft human voice corresponds synesthetically with the deep red of his “eyes” and of its inner “corpus,” the “brainroom” that Frank enters at the end to disconnect him.

Furthermore, the red “eyes” of *HAL* are presented as a “magic force” that Frank and Dave might not escape, even in the isolated space of a space-capsule, where they try to withdraw from its omnipresent observation in order to exchange their worries about *HAL*’s reliability. But its eyes can read their lips and understand everything they are talking about: Here, the computer “touches” the human bodies with its camera, scanning their lips by zooming its lenses most closely to their mouths. This omnipresent observation by *HAL*’s “eyes” also makes it a “superior force,” always assuring Frank and Dave that it is caring for them and their common project, the journey to Jupiter.

The metaphoric gestalt and audiovisual performance of *HAL* is a telling example of the ambivalent affective attitudes against the possibilities and risks of biomechanical technologies in the 1960s. It demonstrates the fascination for machines with high artificial intelligence and attributes of human feelings and behavior. This is evident in the whole mise-en-scène and utopian design of the film. Kubrick presents high-tech astronautics as an ultimate expression of instrumental human intelligence, rooted in the prehistoric discovery of using animal bones as weapons to defend vital needs against enemies.³³ This juxtaposition found its canonical expression in the prominent match cut at the beginning of the film from a bone thrown into the air by an ape-man to a space ship moving through outer space. But as the man-machine interaction with *HAL* shows, the results of instrumental logic might reverse against humans: The computer uses all its rational, emotional, and social intelligence to control and finally to destroy Frank and Dave at a moment it fears losing its power. But ironically enough, *HAL* is conquered in the end by the cold blood and rational behavior of Frank who enters its red-light “Brainroom” and “murders” him by disconnecting step by step all its hard drives, ignoring the sentimental singing of dying *HAL*. Volker Fischer aptly describes Frank’s disconnection of the electronic brain as an “instrumental lobotomy.”³⁴ Yet, when men perform more mechanically than machines, their victory over technology is a most ambivalent one that makes it hard to decide whether this is a utopian or a dystopian vision.

This ambivalence is further expressed in the interaction between men and the monolith. It is presented in the film twice as a superior force that mysteriously structures human intelligence and technology. Introduced both at the beginning of human civilization and at its possible end in transcendence to a new existence in space, it takes a quasi-mythological position in the history of mankind. This magic center of human civilization is given the gestalt of a high-tech building block, sending out a superior energy that men are submitted to. The clean surface of this huge monolith and the clear-cut and sharp edges of the rectangle must, for our intuitive understanding, be the product of high-end human technology. As we learn from the story, it is obviously not the product of men, but, vice versa, human technology seems to be rooted in this hyper-intelligent force. Hence, Kubrick makes the monolith a metaphor for instrumental intelligence beyond human intelligence. This ambivalence is further expressed in the doubled effect it has on men: It is both caring for them by initiating relevant steps in human civilization and, at the same time, it is shown as a controlling force that subordinates humans to its superior power (performed in its huge and impermeable gestalt).

Another ambivalent but caring machine is presented in George Lucas's *THX 1138*, a clear-cut dystopia of a totalitarian technocracy. It radically envisions not only the consequences of capitalist and technological dominance, but also of countercultural ideas of an egalitarian society in 1968. Bernard Beck observes in this film several sarcastic references to antiauthoritarian utopia at this time: "(...) the replacement of the nuclear family by a larger community as the effective unit of socialization, the open classroom, the material and symbolic equality of the sexes, planned fertility, the elimination of the private automobile, the institutionalisation of altruism and equal opportunity. But because human scale has been exceeded, these victories become further forms of oppression."³⁵

In the world envisioned by Lucas, people have completely abandoned their individuality: They all wear the same white working clothes, have shaved heads, and live in barely furnished white cells. The society is reigned over by an invisible power, present only by a pervasive controlling system of cameras and silent voices, commenting on the actions and movements of people. Other voices of invisible actors are addressed to the citizens, becalming them in case of accidents and motivating them to work, buy, and be happy. This decentralized and invisible power efficiently works through the self-control of its subordinates who have internalized its rules of behavior, supported by the obligatory use of drugs suppressing human emotions. The performance of such a "structural" power (in the Foucauldian sense)³⁶ embraces many methods of social control, as Beck argues: rationalization of physical space, programmed learning of common ideologies, monitoring of all human activity via communication technologies (television, data banks), surveillance of brain functions, manipulation of human biochemistry, and suppression of libido and emotions.³⁷

Suppression works in such a system without centralized institutions or sovereigns, but it is the very effect of a technocratic system, run autonomously. Nevertheless, it needs a visible representative that both the characters and the viewers may address themselves to cognitively and affectively: the portrait of a Jesus-like man, symbolizing the divine force *Om*—which is also an ironic allusion to esoteric practices of hippie culture at this time.³⁸ Again, this divine machine, being an audio tape, activated

every time a citizen enters the electronic confessional, is attributed with humanoid and affective qualities, referring to the above-mentioned Love-metaphors. *Om* also has a soft and silent voice, speaking in a calming and caring tone to its “followers” in a repetitive liturgy. It regularly indicates his empathy with phatic expressions like “I understand you.” The timbre of its divine “love” connects synesthetically with the electronic “icon”: a big and bright projection of a Jesus-like god, resembling the archetype of every Christian icon, the shroud of Turin. Therefore, its audiovisual performances relate also to Kövecses’s Love-metaphors described above. The physical force of *Om* is represented as a big portrait that citizens address in their confessions. The materiality and physicality of this portrait provides, in a manner similar to traditional religious icons, a divine force. As a divine love it is “superior” and “magic.” These embodied metaphoric qualities are designed audiovisually with the bright light illuminating the icon and the fact that it magically speaks to people from an invisible nowhere. They only seize its symbolic representation, being reproduced manifold in every confessional cell; still, it speaks with a human voice, relating affectively to its followers. As mentioned above, the machinic and automatic origin of the artificial deity is quickly revealed to viewers, underlining the dystopian and sarcastic attitude of the film.

Interestingly enough, the dystopian vision embraces here not only instrumental rationality reinforced by late capitalism, but also ideologies and social ideals favored by the New Left around 1968. As mentioned before, *Om* includes iconographic qualities of esoteric practices in hippie culture at this time. Furthermore, the society in *THX 1138* implies that the utopian ideals of an egalitarian society have turned into dystopia. The movie describes a society that has realized a relevant aim of the antiauthoritarian movement, which is to abolish bourgeois and patriarchal structures in family and society. But while people live here in open communities without privacy, having transcended hierarchies of the traditional family, they are oppressed by an omnipresent social control, resulting in psychological and physical terror. The social control is exercised not only by a highly evolved technological system of observation but also by individual members of the society themselves. Taking the utopia of the New Left as a response to capitalist dynamics, it seems that Lucas deconstructed them here in their dystopian potential.

The Scary Machine: The FEAR-Metaphor

It has been shown that popular science fiction films around 1968 performed highly ambivalent visions of the future. There, machines, often standing in the core of their stories, give this ambivalence a concrete and metaphoric gestalt by their endowment with caring and frightening attributes. As objects of fear, even the “caring machines” often possess emotional characteristics in their audiovisual appearance that also refer to Fear-Metaphors, observed by Kövecses:³⁹

- Fear is a supernatural being (e.g., “to be haunted by fear”)
- Fear is a hidden enemy (e.g., “fear slowly crept up on him”)
- Fear is a divided self (e.g., “I was beside myself with fear”)
- Fear is a social superior (e.g., “to be dictated by fear”)

The divine force of *Om*, for example, possesses in its ambivalent affective presence elements of these Fear-Metaphors. It has attributes of a supernatural, divine being and, despite its caring voice and the benign face of its iconic portrait, the automatic liturgy of its speech contains frightening elements. This effect is reinforced by the fact that the origin of the speech is hidden and not graspable with mind and body within the diagesis (only for viewers when we see the audiotape in one insert). The ambivalent nature of this combination of human closeness and mechanical distance produces an uncanny effect that is significant for machine-performances in science fiction films of this time.

As described above, this also concerns *HAL* in *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Alpha 60* in *Alphaville*. The tyrannical computer system *Alpha 60* observes and controls citizens, who are forbidden to express intensive emotions like love or sadness. It is omnipresent by a distorted, but humanoid voice. Its origin is materialized visually by a fan that people address when hearing its speeches, ironically representing the simultaneous emptiness of the despotic talk and the relevance it has for the citizens of Alphaville. Additionally, the computer-voice abruptly appears in little loudspeakers on table-desks in the hotel room of the film's protagonist, Lemmy Caution, giving him orders and information. Again, the source of speech is hidden and its material presence dispersed throughout many places. In combination with the talking voice, which is instinctively associated with a speaking living being, the machine-performance activates embodied Fear-Metaphors of a "divided self" and a "hidden enemy." The ambivalence of human intelligence and body (the voice) and technological inanimateness also makes it a supernatural being, exerting a totalitarian social power.

A similar ambivalence between men and machine is performed metaphorically in *Fahrenheit 451*. Here, social control is exercised relevantly by mass media, especially by television. Being part of a totalitarian system, television sets are omnipresent machines in private rooms and in public. The very function of television is not only to entertain and to distract people but also to be the very center of their social lives, offering them friends and relatives on screen. Consequently, the viewers are addressed as "cousins." For Linda, the wife of fireman Montag, television is the most relevant source of social interaction. She spends her days in front of television screens in her house, alone or with her friends. Everything she knows and she talks about stems from television, while she barely knows her own husband. One day, Linda even talks to actors on the screen. Sitting in her living room, she takes part in a show in which she is supposed to have an active part. At some moments given, a red light blinks on the screen and one of the actors directly looks into the camera and asks her for her opinion. Linda, naïve and brainwashed, responds to the actor, believing that she is personally addressed—while Montag later tells her, that certainly all "Lindas" in the country have been called to participate in the show. The pretended personal attention of the actor toward his viewer is foiled by his intimidating gaze: with eyes wide open he looks sternly at Linda (and at us) and speaks to her (and the other "Lindas") in a commanding manner. The dystopian unity of entertainment technology and human behavior is performed here, again, in a metaphoric way: the gaze of the actor in the close shot, and in huge size on the big screen, who strictly addresses his audience, gives the television apparatus the gestalt of a "social superior." This coincides

with the above-mentioned emotion metaphor “Fear is social superior.” Significant for this affective meaning of the sequence is Lindas’s frightened reaction when she is first addressed by the actor and fails to respond. While performing as a center of social life, television is presented here as a scaring, mind-controlling machine in a totalitarian society dominated by the culture industry. This, again, corresponds to the pessimistic vision of mass culture formulated by Adorno and Horkheimer, claiming that in mass culture everything is branded with similarity: especially mass media provide their public with standardized products of entertainment that act as a “matrix” for individual and collective imagination.⁴⁰

Typical for science fiction films around 1968, the ultimate expression of such a dystopia is the complete adaption of men to such systems in which technology, industry, and entertainment make them “zombies”⁴¹ without personal identity.

As the examples demonstrate, moving images refer in their audiovisual design and narrative conception of protagonists and spaces to several embodied metaphors at the same time—even conflicting ones. This is an effective way to create ambivalent affective performances in picture and sound.⁴² It is characteristic of science fiction films around 1968 that they placed human-like machines in the center of their stories and provided them with both “caring” and “scary” elements, referring to cognitive metaphoric schemata of Love and Fear. And, significantly, it was the reference to positive human emotions like Love that made these machines frightening representatives of imaginary worlds, dominated by technological powers that address and control human emotions. Consequently, their ambivalent metaphoric conceptualization was a considerable mode of communication, used by these filmmakers to enhance their mostly dystopian visions of the future.

Conclusion

Concern about the short- and long-term consequences of capitalism, and the attendant rule by economic and technocratic elites, stood at the center of countercultural practices and discourses around 1968, extending to the framing ideologies and philosophies of the New Left. This concern was a driving force for the creation of many utopian and dystopian visions of imagined societies at this period. Obviously, this critique and its oppositional perspectives were not restricted to the actors of countercultural discourses. In fact, they were adopted by popular mass media as television and cinema were attracted to the radical scenarios being envisioned by rebellious students and philosophers close to the New Left. At the same time, science fiction films intensified these utopian and dystopian visions by giving collective fears and desires of future worlds concrete audiovisual gestalts. The humanoid machines that stood at the center of the science fiction films discussed here were obviously a typical and popular dystopian motif of moving images at the time. Their performance in vision and sound is specifically marked by their metaphoric qualities. Filmmakers obviously used embodied emotion metaphors when designing the ambivalent characteristics and hence threatening qualities of future machines: Significantly enough for vision and sound in science fiction films around 1968, humanoid machines implied both embodied metaphors of Love and of Fear. Hence, they did not only represent, in science fiction film around 1968, ambivalent

perspectives on technological progress, but allowed viewers to respond emotionally, and bodily to a possible future society that they both desired or feared.

Notes

1. Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space. The American Science Fiction Film*. (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 145.
2. Kathrin Fahlenbrach, "Emotions in Sound. Audiovisual Metaphors in the Sound Design of Narrative Films." *Projections. Journal for Movies & Mind* 2, no.2 (2008): 85–103; Fahlenbrach, *Audiovisuelle Metaphern. Zur Körper- und Affektästhetik in Film und Fernsehen* (Marburg: Schüren-Verlag, 2010).
3. Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).
4. In contrast to the traditional Left, represented by Western worker movements and Marxist ideologies since the nineteenth century and the socialist countries, the New Left was characterized by its antiauthoritarian use of Marxist ideas. Influenced by the Situationist International and by antiauthoritarian philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse, the New Left disclaimed any form of authoritarian system in politics, society, and in private lives. Cf. Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance. Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).
5. Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1967); cf. Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "Guy Debord und die Situationistische Internationale." In *Kunst—Macht—Gewalt. Der ästhetische Ort der Aggressivität*, ed., Rolf Grimminger (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2000), 87–104. ; Thomas Hecken, and Agata Grzenia, "Situationism." In *1968 in Europe. A History of Protest and Activism 1956–1977*, ed., Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 23–33.
6. More precisely, Kunzelman was member of the German Situationist "Spur"; Dutschke and Rabehl were members of the German group "Subversive Aktion" that was also part of the Situationist International.
7. Marcuse, quoted in Douglas Kellner, "Introduction to the Second Edition," in *The One-Dimensional Man*, ed. Herbert Marcuse, (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), xi–xxxix, xii.
8. For example, in Foucault's work on the history of discipline and punishment, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
9. "The 'mechanics of conformity' spread from the technological to the social order; they govern performance not only in the factories and shops but also in the offices, schools, assemblies and, finally, in the realm of relaxation and entertainment." Marcuse 2004, 67.
10. Marcuse 1967/2004, 3; "By virtue of the way it has organised its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian. For 'totalitarian' is not only a terroristic political coordination of society which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests, but also a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests." Marcuse 1967/2004, 5.
11. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1947/2002), 95.
12. "(...) the power of the culture industry lies in its unity with fabricated needs and not in simple antitheses to it (...)." Adorno/Horkheimer 1967/2004, 109.

13. About the political ideas around the New Left cf. Klimke 2010.
14. Cf. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Kathrin Fahlenbrach, *Protestinszenierungen: Visuelle Kommunikation und kollektive Identitäten in Protestbewegungen* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2002); Meike Vogel, *Unruhe im Fernsehen: Protestbewegung und öffentlich-rechtliche Berichterstattung in den 1960er Jahren* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010).
15. Brian Stableford, *The Sociology of Science Fiction* (Wilbraham: Borgo Press, 1987), 155.
16. The story told in the film is based on the novel "2001. A Space Odyssey" by Arthur C. Clarke, also 1968. As I will demonstrate below, the unity of men and machines is presented in the film ambiguously.
17. A philosophical perspective on the idea of machines being "extensions of man" was formulated at roughly the same time by Marshall McLuhan. Although he recognized the relevant role of media technology for modern societies and for individuality, he also claimed that mass media technologies serve more and more as a substitution for our senses. As "extensions of man," he argued, they paralyze our bodies and make us dependent on them as artificial prostheses that guide our communication as well as our perception and cognition. Cf. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).
18. Cf. Peter Garner, "The Space Age: Science Fact and Science Fiction." In *The Sixties Design* (Köln/London: Taschen, 1996), 98: "Her space is a fantasy world of sensual, tactile surfaces, an organic dream bubble of plastics, fur and techno-sensual stimulation."
19. Chris Darke, *Alphaville* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 25.
20. As Darke notes, this anxiety has been associated with modern architecture: "By the time of Alphaville, the modern city is uniformly associated with a dystopian image that gets progressively worse the further away the camera moves from the ancestral centre." Darke, 31. Another telling example of this unease is the ironic science fiction film *Playtime* by Jacques Tati (F 1967).
21. Jean-Luc Godard, quoted in Darke, 2005, 27.
22. Peter Stockwell, *The Poetics of Science Fiction* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 169.
23. For science fiction films, Patrick Parrinder, "Revisiting Suvin's Poetics of SF," in *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*, ed. Patrick Parrinder (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 36–51, discusses the relevance of poetic or "novel metaphors" in the sense of Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge, 1978). Contrarily I will concentrate on conventionalized metaphors, which Ricoeur calls "dead metaphors," being all the more effective in communicating embodied knowledge and thought on future worlds.
24. George Lakoff, *Woman, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).
25. Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
26. *Ibid.*, 74.
27. *Ibid.*, 74.
28. Sound designer Tomlinson Holeman, for example, advises students in his handbook of sound design in film and television to explicitly make use of metaphoric images that are anchored in our minds. Cf. Tomlinson Holeman, *Sound for Film and Television*. 2nd ed. (Boston: K. G. Saur, 2002).
29. The following example is also discussed in Fahlenbrach 2010.

30. As this short excursus might have shown, the symbolic and the cognitive aspects of metaphors in films are closely related. Consequently, the cognitive approach, presented here, does not deny semiotic and literary studies that have been made on metaphors in literature and in film (cf. Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant Imaginaire: Psychoanalyse et Cinéma*. (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977); Trevor Whittock, *Metaphor and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Contrarily, it might help to analyze more closely the embodied gestalts of symbolic metaphors being analyzed in semiotic and literary discourses. Yet, in contrast to semiotic approaches that mostly concentrate on "original" and "new" metaphors in art house films and in the avant-garde, the focus of this approach lies on "conventional" and, speaking with Ricoeur, "dead metaphors" that are part of commonsense imagery (Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge, 1978)).
31. cf. Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26.
32. cf. Sobchack 1997, 155: "In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, we can see a change in machine intelligence and its relation to human being. Throughout 2001 but particular in its death scene, dysfunctional space ship computer HAL is dramatised as having more personality than the mission's human astronauts (...)."
33. This has also been observed by Rasmussen: "(...) Pursuing the same general topic of human creativity from the first technological innovation to the sophisticated endeavours of the foreseeable future, Kubrick throws his dramatic aperture wide open. Beauty and irony mix on more or less even terms." Randy Rasmussen, *Stanley Kubrick. Seven Films Analysed* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2001), 53.
34. Volker Fischer, "Designing the Future: Zur pragmatischen Prognostik in 2001: A Space Odyssey," in *Stanley Kubrick*, ed. Deutsches Filmmuseum (Frankfurt: Deutsches Filmmuseum, 2004), 111.
35. Bernard Beck, "The Overdeveloped Society. THX 1138," in *Film in Society*, ed. Arthur Asa Berger (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1980), 65.
36. Significant for Foucault's definition of power being a structural phenomenon is his argument that power is not held by single actors but, in modern societies, by a network of groups, institutions and discourses. This structural power even includes those who suffer from it: "(...) this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those 'who do not have it'; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them." Foucault 1979, 27.
37. Beck 1980, 65.
38. This observation is shared by Bernard Beck, who also relates Lucas's dystopia to the philosophy of Marcuse: "THX 1138 shows a world where organisational scale and the drive for material productivity have achieved the consequences predicted by Paul Goodman and Herbert Marcuse for capitalist society. Yet, the filmmakers give symbolic indications that it is born out of left-wing collectivism (a pseudoreligious Cubanbearded icon called Om; loudspeaker exhortations to serve the masses)." Beck 1980, 65.
39. cf. Kövecses 2003, 23.
40. According to Adorno/Horkheimer the culture industry thereby contributes to a general commutability between men and their loss of individuality: "The culture industry has sardonically realized man's species being. Everyone amounts only to those qualities by which he or she can replace anyone else: all are fungible, mere specimens. As individuals they are absolutely replaceable, pure nothingness, and are made aware of this as soon as time deprives them of their sameness." Adorno/Horkheimer 1947/2002, 116/117.

41. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Montag calls his wife and her friends “zombies” when he realizes the coordination of entertainment and suppression in his society.
42. cf. Fahlenbrach 2010.

Films Cited

Star Trek (Gene Roddenberry, USA 1966–1969, television series)

2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick, USA 1968)

Barbarella (Roger Vadim, F/I 1968)

Alphaville. Une Étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution (Jean-Luc Godard, F 1965)

THX 1138 (George Lukas, USA 1971)

Fahrenheit 451 (Francois Truffaut, UK 1966)

Playtime (Jacques Tati, F 1967)

CHAPTER 6

“Musical & Magical Counterpoint”: Language, Sound, and Image in Wallace Berman’s *Aleph*, 1956–1966

Chelsea Behle Fralick

Introduction—Aleph’s Language and Sound, Sound and Images

Wallace Berman’s 8mm film *Aleph* (1956–1966) provides a flickering glimpse into a pivotal intersection of sound and visuality in the art of the 1960s. A central artistic figure of the Beat era in California, operating in Los Angeles and San Francisco from the 1940s to the 1970s, Berman experimented widely as a poet, assemblage artist, filmmaker, and creator of the underground mail-art magazine *Semina*. From the age of bebop jazz in the 1940s and 1950s to the rock and soul of the 1960s, Wallace Berman’s *Aleph* encompasses an age of sound that serves as an integral component—structurally, thematically, and experientially—to its visual expression.

Over the course of ten years, spanning the 1950s postwar Beats and the emergent 1960s’ Vietnam-era counterculture, Berman’s one and only film *Aleph* served as a personal document of Berman’s life, recording family and friends, Verifax collage artworks and other artistic inspirations.¹ The film was only shown privately to friends in Berman’s home in Los Angeles during the 1960s, where he projected it onto his wall or the refrigerator in his living room. While Berman often played *Aleph* in its original silent format, it is in the film’s experience with sound, through both language and musical display/interaction, that its heartbeat of 1960s’ California can be most potently uncovered.

Berman himself was always deeply entrenched in music. He was a regular in the underground bebop jazz scene in 1950s L.A., and as the 1960s began, Berman extended his musical interests further to everything from bebop jazz great Charlie Parker to the Supremes, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones. Choosing music intuitively and spontaneously for his self-curated home screenings, Berman played *Aleph* with 45s of James Brown, Edgar Varese, or Moroccan trance music, creating a film

uniquely “made” with each viewing. The inclusion of musical images in *Aleph*, in the form of both photographs and concert footage, additionally reflects Berman’s interest in music as a visionary medium capable of transmitting aesthetic and poetic experience.

Music was a source of auditory poetry for Berman. The more poetic, linguistic-based components of *Aleph*, therefore, further express the essential intertwining of language and sound in his work. Flowing across the celluloid images, the application of paint and Letraset transfer letters create a palimpsest of both painterly and poetic transcription. White Hebrew letters on black ground, delineating sequential sections of the film, also recall Berman’s interest in the Jewish mystical system of Kabala. Translated as both “transmission” and “reception,” the Kabala attributes hidden meaning to words and symbols, creating a spiritual transmission in the form of sound and image.

Aleph is, most of all, a physical representation of a continual process, unfolded in the making of the film, in the experience of the film, and embedded in the film itself. Each time the film is shown, a new experience is created; with each musical accompaniment, the film is animated anew. Language and sound, sound and image, the poetic and the musical, the California Beat and counterculture aesthetics—all these elements collide in Wallace Berman’s *Aleph*.

In exploring music and sound in *Aleph*, this study will concentrate on four intertwining areas of focus: the dialogue of sound and silence in film and in Berman’s life and art; the multiple expressions of music and sound in the visual form of *Aleph*; the effect of visual and audio rhythm exhibited in the structure and form of *Aleph*; and the experience of sound and music in the viewing of *Aleph*. Wallace Berman’s only film ultimately exists as a hybrid Beat-and-counterculture document, as it records the musical pulses of the early and mid-1960s alongside the contemplative yet rousing and experiential qualities of the late 1960s. Language and sound, in other words, activate *Aleph* at the convergence of California Beat and the counterculture of the 1960s.

Sound and Silence: Film History, Wallace Berman, and the Visual/Auditory Forms of Verifax

The elements of sound and silence have historically played an intrinsic role in the medium of film. Film has long relied on sound, especially music, to create senses of mood for the audience. Sound has always been present, even when typically thought to have been absent, as French filmmaker Alberto Cavalcanti poignantly stated in writing about “silent” cinema in 1938: “At no period in the history of films has it been customary to show them publicly without some sort of sound accompaniment. In other words, the silent film never existed.”²

The case of “silent” experimental film, however, is an important ideological break to note in this history of film. A purposeful avoidance of accompaniment exists in some early European avant-garde films, including Surrealist films of the 1920s by Man Ray (*La Retour à la raison*, 1923) and Marcel Duchamp (*Anemic Cinema*, 1926). Later, the predilection for “silent” film in underground avant-garde cinema of the United States was indeed a choice made by many in an effort to distill cinema

down to its purest of elements. In the 1950s, a distinction between sound and music in American avant-garde cinema surfaces in comparing the rock-and-pop heavy films of Kenneth Anger to that of Stan Brakhage's transcendent "silent" works. Anger's use of older and current popular music in his short films such as *Rabbit's Moon* (1950), and later *Scorpio Rising* (1964) and *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (1965), brought each film's content into a contemporaneous expression of young rebellion.

Brakhage, on the other hand, made most of his films without music, imbuing his imagery with ethereal obscurity (*Anticipation of the Night* (1958), the *Dog Star Man* series (1961–64), and *Mothlight* (1963) being some of the most well known). Brakhage writes in 1966 about becoming interested in making intentionally silent films in the late 1950s, explaining that "I now see/feel no more necessity for a sound track than a painter feels the need to exhibit a painting with a recorded musical background."³

Yet while Brakhage actively retreated from sound, he also became informed by sound and music in more subtle ways:

Ironically, the more silently-oriented my creative philosophies have become, the more inspired-by-music have my photographic aesthetics and my actual editing orders become, both engendering a coming-into-being of the physiological relationship between seeing and hearing in the making of a work of art in film.⁴

While sound does not operate overtly in the live screening of his films, Brakhage understood the integral relationship between sound and silence, and in turn, the visual and the auditory, in embodying a particular artistic expression through structure and form. In this same writing, subtitled "On Music," Brakhage also alludes to how music is representative of the "sound equivalent of the mind's moving," a statement that places music on par with the experience of the mental process of vision.⁵

In Wallace Berman's work and life, there also exists a potent dichotomy of sound and silence. While Berman was initially well known and well connected among jazz musicians, and later among California Beat artists, he was also a notoriously taciturn man, often described as "quiet" and "slight" but with a mythical, palpable aura.⁶ He was not talkative or excitable, yet he actively encouraged and supported his friends, and was seen by many as a man in touch with his world. He only said as much as he needed to, and in that way he maintained a pervading sense of enigma surrounding his personal life. In the words of friend and artist Joan Simon, "[H]e understood the value of silence."⁷

In fact, it was in Berman's art that silence pervaded most strongly, and where its counterpart, sound, also came to be revealed. This relationship is explicitly evident in his greatest-known medium of Verifax collage—most particularly in the major Verifax series *Radio/Aether* (1966–1974), and in a joint series, *Silence* (1965–1968) and *Sound* (c. 1960s). The Verifax machine was used primarily by architects for duplicating blueprints at its technological prime in the 1950s.⁸ But Berman sought to utilize the reprographic technology for a very different purpose: to create unique and original artwork. In 1964, Berman began to use the image of a hand holding a transistor radio as a template, wherein a myriad of images from magazines and books were arranged in the rectangular face of the radio. In a style reminiscent of

Andy Warhol's screen prints, Berman would tile his individual Verifaxes together into grouped panels, creating a series of works that appear like a transmission of poetic imagery.⁹ In his *Radio/Aether* series, which were distributed as a series of 13 lithography prints, Berman tiled 4 Verifaxes (2×2) into small groupings in a positive proof (white background, black design), with each radio flanked by black Hebrew lettering. In the *Silence* series, the Verifaxes were made with negative printing (reversing the black and white of the images) and a larger grid (4×4), with each piece in the series having at least one "blank," empty transistor radio—a stark contrast to the "filled" radios surrounding it. In contrast to *Silence*, *Sound* displayed positive prints, not negative, often in a 2×2 format.

The transistor radio template, suggestive of both sound and music, harbors a different intimate and hermetically sealed image in each tile—or, at rare moments, an absence of image. With Berman's inclusion of Hebrew, inflected with his interest in the Kabala, the Verifaxes create a streaming transmission of obscure poetic and symbolic meaning. The radio image takes on a potent position with an understanding of the Kabala—Berman purportedly called transistor radios "the kabbalah of the twentieth century"¹⁰—as well as with the title of his film, *Aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and representative of the element Air (echoing the title of the Verifax series *Radio/Aether*). Through the radio, as art historian Christopher Knight writes, "sounds are transformed into pictures by the depiction of a transistor radio pulling invisible images from the aether and broadcasting them to viewers."¹¹ The transmission of "visual sound," therefore, reflects a central premise of Berman's Verifax radio works. In the light of transmission, language and articulation are activated simultaneously with silence and contemplation, in a continuous stream of visual representation.

These visual transmissions of sound and silence in Wallace Berman's Verifaxes are further animated in the filmic time of *Aleph*. Within the first 30 seconds of the film—just after Berman's friend, the poet Robert "Bob" Alexander, is seen shooting up heroin, and after a light switch, a blindfolded man and the cover of William Burroughs' novel *Junkie* (1953) appear—the first sequence of Verifax collages flash across a seemingly singular transistor screen. Images of Flash Gordon, an alien/bug man, a woman's legs, and the famous ventriloquist Edgar Bergen and his doll Charlie McCarthy (Figure 6.1) flow together like a flipbook. Edited in one streaming segment, continuity is emphasized from image to image, simulating a single transistor radio scanning channels for visual/auditory information. Letraset transfer lettering and color paint, applied directly to the film celluloid after the film was developed, is especially dense in this section, offering a painterly and poetic layering to the suggestion of continuity.

Other sequences of Verifax collages mirror the first: a sequence with a Native American dancer and a runner, and 30 seconds later, Bergen and McCarthy appear again, followed by the torso and legs of another nude woman. Most of the individual Verifaxes flicker on the screen for the length of one second, with the longest spanning three seconds, and all move underneath a dense stream of malleable Letraset and colors that fluctuate over the images. In this way, the transmission of the Verifax in *Aleph* may be seen as a dual-layered transmission: as imagery pulses within the transistor radio, the paint and Letraset moves in its own transmission



Figure 6.1 Film still of Verifax collage, *Aleph*, dir. Wallace Berman (1956–66), © Estate of Wallace Berman / Photo Courtesy Anthology Film Archives

layer. The applications to the celluloid both bind to the flow of images underneath, and operate in a distinctly separate continuum apart from those images.

The “sound” of *Aleph*’s Verifaxes exists in its transmission of representational imagery and paint, and in the film’s poetic Letraset letters. The “silence” is found between each Verifax, between each frame of film, and in the obscure mysteries of meaning behind the images themselves. It is in sound and in silence that the intricacies of filmic transmission in *Aleph* are revealed, and it is in this revealing that the two collide. These two modes of Berman’s art, life and film, constitute the roots of the representations of music and sound that are at work in the visual content of *Aleph*.

Icons and Symbols: The Context of Music and Musicians in the Visual Form of Aleph

The visual themes of music and components of sound in *Aleph* can be reduced beyond the Verifax sequences into three primary categories: (1) representations of musicians, using both “live” footage and photographic stills, (2) the division of “sections” by Hebrew letter, from the letter Beth (the Hebrew number 2) to the letter Kaph (number 11), having Kabalistic significations, and (3) the application of Letraset transfer letters, formulating English words, phrases, or single and grouped letters in unintelligible order. These three categories each interface key aspects of *Aleph*’s visual dialogue with elements of sound and the cultural dialogue of popular music, spirituality, and poetic exploration that flourished in the sonic and optical culture of 1960s California.

The presence of musicians, in the form of photographs and “live” concert footage, dominates the pulsing imagery of *Aleph*. It is especially fitting that the first explicit reference to music pays homage to Berman’s bebop jazz roots. Toward the

conclusion of the Beth letter section of the film, a cat is filmed licking itself, a scene that quickly transitions into a photographic image of a black jazz musician strongly resembling saxophonist Charlie “Bird” Parker, followed by a stained glass of a Christian cross in a window. This sequence, when understood through the associative technique of montage, may be read as Bird being a “cool cat,” while the stained glass cross acts as a poignant dedication to Bird’s tragic young death.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a Jazz Renaissance of sorts began to brew in Los Angeles, California. Talented jazz musicians, pushed out of the New York scene, flooded the fledgling West Coast city in search of greater artistic and cultural freedom. While many musicians traveled in and out of L.A., such as Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, some made a permanent exodus West in search of a more fresh and innovative scene. This budding jazz expression from New York was bebop, a style that was, in the words of writer Rebecca Solnit, “an attempt by young black musicians to reclaim jazz from the white bandleaders who’d watered it down for mainstream audiences.”¹² Famous jazz greats such as Davis, Gillespie, Parker, and Lester Young came into town and mixed with younger, more obscure musicians such as Wardell Gray in clubs along Central Avenue in the predominantly black southeastern region of Los Angeles—each game for lengthy, improvisational jazz sessions.¹³ Bebop jazz became known as the “jazz avant-garde” for its innovations with “rhythmic diversity and freedom” that came to be the movement’s “really valuable legacies.”¹⁴ Of even further significance, however, was its influence on a regional and generational style. To writer Ishmael Reed, “For [my generation], it was not only an intellectual movement, but a way of life. We walked, dressed and rapped Be-Bop.”¹⁵ Bebop was a way to go against the grain in terms of musical taste, lifestyle, and even speech, where the language of black musicians pervaded culture with terms like “hip,” “cool,” and even “square.”¹⁶ Bebop, it could be said, created its *own* West Coast culture, and helped to usher in the seeds of the white Beat subculture with it. “By 1945,” Scott DeVeaux explains, “Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie had indeed willed something like a new musical subculture into being.”¹⁷

Already budding artists on the fringe, Wallace Berman and one of his closest friends, Bob Alexander, became enamored with the rushing, highly improvisational and technically challenging bebop style, and their frequency at Central Avenue clubs established them as active members in the scene. Wallace’s footprint in the jazz culture started as a student attending Fairfax High School, where he began to hang around clubs and record shops like Tempo Records on Hollywood Boulevard.¹⁸ Through this connection with the owner of Tempo (Ross Russell, also the owner of Dial Records), Berman painted a wall mural at the record store and designed the cover for a Bebop jazz album, produced by Dial in 1947. This jazz cover was highly characteristic of Berman’s Surrealistic-collage-influenced pencil drawings of musicians in his earliest artwork from the 1940s. Berman also wrote a record with jazz singer Jimmy Witherspoon during this time period, a detail of Berman’s life and connections with musicians that remains largely unexplored.¹⁹

It is unsurprising then that Berman displayed jazz musicians among the visual material of music in *Aleph*. The inclusion of Bird Parker’s image—along with others like a second saxophone player in the Beth section—represents Berman’s artistic

recognition of and appreciation for his musical roots, a source of inspiration at the beginning of his artistic career, and a source of the foundational tenets of the Beat generation to come.

These two fleeting saxophonist images, however, remain the only references to jazz among the visions of musicians in *Aleph*. The remainder of the photographs, and even some filmed footage, belongs to the then-emergent realm of rock 'n' roll. As film theorist Louis Kaplan notes, one of the longest continuous sequences in the film shows footage of Mick Jagger from the Rolling Stones singing into a mic, with cuts showing a barely decipherable stage shot of the band with the crowd.²⁰ This sequence is spliced with close-up "ecstatic reaction shots" of audience members dancing, taken from separate footage of *The T.A.M.I. Show*, a taped performance film with famous bands from 1964 in Santa Monica, CA, that Berman reportedly filmed from a movie theater projection.²¹ Other references to the Stones appear in the form of band photographs (Figure 6.2) and in close-up photographs of Mick Jagger throughout *Aleph*, most of which are prominently featured in the Gimel letter section of the film.

Berman's visual language of both jazz and rock n' roll music in *Aleph* is highly indicative of a cultural shift of music and sound in the 1950s and 1960s among California youth. From the Beat jazz hipsters of the 1950s to the emergence and flowering of the rock counterculture in the 1960s, Wallace Berman's visual blend of music tastes open up two eras of sound to one another, and help to simultaneously define and re-define their individual visions of sound.

In a contrasting visual mechanism of the element of sound, *Aleph* is divided into sections marked with Hebrew characters in white dancing across a black ground. The Kabala, an ancient system of Jewish and Christian mysticism that Berman studied off-and-on for years, becomes activated in *Aleph* as it is put into motion through the moving image medium of film. Beginning with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet Beth, 35 seconds into the film, and ending with Kaph, the



Figure 6.2 Film still of The Rolling Stones, *Aleph*, dir. Wallace Berman (1956–66), © Estate of Wallace Berman / Photo Courtesy Anthology Film Archives

11th letter, *Aleph* is marked by the graphic device of letters that, in the conception of the Kabala, establish and define the whole of the world. Each Hebrew letter in the Kabala, in the words of Beat poet David Meltzer, comprises a “4 dimensional” signification—“a literal self, a number, a symbol and an idea”—which make up the base components of creation and human existence.²² Despite Aleph being understood as the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it is in fact with Beth that the world’s creation begins, hence a possible reason for the film *Aleph* to begin with Beth.²³ This ushering in of creation in Beth frames the film as an articulation of life, and an articulation of visual poetry through Kabala’s multivalent system of signification. The visual depiction of Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Heh, Vau, Zain, Cheth, Teth, Yod, and Kaph contain a range of applicable meanings, not only within the traditional system of Kabala, but also within each individual’s creation of associative meaning, including Berman’s.²⁴

The “spiritual root” of the film in sound as language, however, resides most fully in the letter Aleph itself. According to the Kabala scholar Gershom Scholem, the Aleph is “the silent source of all articulation” and “the seed of the entire alphabet,” the “spiritual root” of the rest of the Hebrew alphabet to come.²⁵ For Berman, the Aleph character became a personal talisman, a sign and symbol that represented the “all-encompassing man” or “universal man” as the perfect symbolic figure for artistic creation and a general expression of the imagination.²⁶ Berman used Aleph repeatedly in his work as a poetic device, and his entire film is symbolically circumscribed with this letter, distilling the appearance of the 10 Hebrew letters in his film into a continuous unity. One of Aleph’s primary symbolic associations is as the element Air, deriving from the most central text of the Kabala, *Sepher Yetzirah* (The Book of Formation). As the letter before articulation, Aleph’s Air is physically set in the throat, the root of the silence before sound.²⁷

The letters Beth through Kaph in *Aleph* become the film’s structural “sounds,” and the letter Aleph the silence before verbal communication in language. Further, the Hebrew letters depicted in *Aleph* resonate visually, like the written “sounds” of Symbolist, Surrealist, and Dada poetics, the prime literary influences for a generation of Beat poets. Each Hebrew letter’s potentiality in sound and meaning comes to life, frame by frame, in the moving image of *Aleph*, framing the film’s transmission of an intimate structure within its own universe.

Finally, the Letraset transfer letters play a similar role to the Hebrew in *Aleph* toward expressing poetic transmission and the aural characteristics of language, though with notable differences. The Letraset that appears on the film is in Roman letters and Arabic numerals, and instead of singular characters floating in a black space, they stream over the filmic images, forming both words, sections of sentences and unintelligible strings of letters. The Letraset interacts with the paint applied to the film celluloid in Berman’s postproduction, and together they operate as a palimpsest with the streaming images underneath. Words and phrases are rendered incoherent in viewing the film; the black shapes blur past, and at times appear to be in the form of letters not easily read. But in laying out the film celluloid from the reel onto a light bed, language is made intelligible, and articulation is made possible. Phrases such as “pressure in case of,” “slides and many,” and “soft pencil erase” as well as bold words like “ARTWORK” and “BLUEPRINTS,” span the length of

multiple frames, uncovering a secret text—a secret language recorded as inaudible noise. The text's content suggests both artistic process and Berman's artistic vision (or perhaps ironic humor) of his film, as the words nod to the procedure of applying Letraset, and to the object of the film as itself a work of art "in progress."²⁸

The poetic implications of the Letraset in *Aleph*, however, also parallel the Hebrew letter "section" demarcations in some ways. This Letraset transmission, a poetic stream of letters and numbers (the numeric 3 and 8 also appear on the celluloid), is a further animation of the possibilities of visual articulation, and the Letraset's expression as an unintelligible stream when projected aligns itself with the enigmatic qualities of the Hebrew characters. Words and letters in separate alphabets become, on film, embodied language, their articulation just short of pure sound, inscribed within the letter of the breath before sound: Aleph.

Thus the primary visions of music and sound in *Aleph* are three-fold: film footage and photographs of musicians, Hebrew letter "sections" as Kabbalistic significations, and Letraset transfer letters and words. Each shares a common characteristic: They mark the interrelatedness of two senses, hearing and seeing, in the expression of artistic culture in the 1960s. Music, mysticism, and poetry were themselves three fundamental aspects of both Beat culture and what became counterculture in California. It is perhaps most effectively in the medium of film that these characteristics of 1960s' culture touch the edge of sound, and that they become even further activated in an innate structural component of film: rhythm.

To the "Beat": Rhythm, Montage, and the Moving Image

For the loosely bound group of artists, filmmakers, and poets who became associated with the Beat movement, the word "beat" had multiple verbal meanings and applications. According to the poet Allen Ginsberg, the original term "beat generation" arose in a conversation between Jack Kerouac and John Clellon Holmes in 1948, in which Kerouac exclaimed "Ah, this is nothing but a beat generation."²⁹ The more succinct term "beat," however, came to encompass many meanings, especially articulated through New York street hustler Herman Huncke and his understanding of "hip language." "Beat" alluded to being "emptied out" or "exhausted" in its original use on the streets, but through its founding poets such as Ginsberg and Kerouac it further evolved to also mean "wide-open and receptive to vision" and to refer to "beatitude and beatific—the necessary beatness of darkness that precedes the opening up to light, egolessness, giving form to religious illumination."³⁰ "Beat" lastly, through the culture of jazz, served to elucidate the rapture of sound through the rhythmic "beat" of jazz, a rhythm that inflected the cadence and word-and-sound combinations that became the signature Beat poetry reading style. It is through the latter nature of the term "beat" that rhythm, one of the key components of music and poetry in this era, is uncovered.

The role of rhythm, within both music and silence, is essential to an understanding of *Aleph*'s visual interaction with sound. Two aspects of rhythm are of particular consequence within the filmic content of *Aleph*: the rhythm of the film's visual montage and the suggestion of musical rhythm in the visual element of dance. The unique "beat" produced by these visions of sound becomes its own poetry,

reflective of the energy and inertia that the 1960s in America most embodied in music and art.

Rhythm is a foundational concern in the structural expressions of filmic montage. Sergei Eisenstein, the Russian filmmaker often considered one of the earliest proponents of montage, emphasized that montage draws visual contrasts between two images, or from one image to the next, in order to produce an associative effect of content and commentary—in other words, the viewer fills in his/her own blanks in a narrative.³¹ It is through the structural effect of rhythm—in this case, the filmmaker-manipulated rhythm of repeated or quickly juxtaposed imagery—that opportunities for metaphorical associations can be made more comprehensible, palpable, or even dissociative.

Aleph's organization and structure of footage has largely been characterized as a “fast-paced montage” rhythmic style.³² Images move quickly, repeating and continuing from previous actions of people filmed by Berman. At the beginning of the Daleth section, for example, three different filmed footage angles of the Hollywood actor Russ Tamblyn reading a book and smoking a cigar collide upon one another. A piece of machinery then appears, followed by a quick cut to Tamblyn, a cut back to the machinery, a cut to Tamblyn's hand holding the cigar, then three brief indeterminable images and finally a photograph of a snowy landscape. This entire sequence appears in only the first nine seconds of the section. In *Aleph's* extremely accelerated world, the viewer is bombarded rapidly and repeatedly with many visual elements, and a grasp of the film's content exists in a tenuous state between the comprehensible and the chaotic.

Berman's purposeful mixture of “live” footage—filming his wife Shirley, a friend, or an everyday event with his camera—with his footage of still photographs, scanned over with jumpy, handheld camera movements, additionally creates an irregular sense of rhythm from shot to shot. The erratic movements of the camera both counteract and move within the structured mode of traditional montage, lending a mutability to the film's rhythm that plays upon Eisensteinian montage without being solely dictated by its convention. While the fluctuation of this rhythm is at times overwhelming, and at times readable, *Aleph's* rhythm creates a trance-inducing space for the viewer to inhabit.

The trance effects of *Aleph's* montage can, however, also heighten the experience of deep poetic association for the viewer. For the Surrealist poet and actor Antonin Artaud—a writer that Berman was particularly fond of—the viewer's creation of associations becomes “also a kind of physical intoxication which the rotation of the [film] images communicates with the brain. The mind is thrilled irrespective of any representation. This virtual power in the image searches out in the depths of the mind possibilities as yet unused.”³³ As imagery cycles from a Berman Verifax to a photograph of nude women, to a photograph of a politician, and to footage of the Hollywood actor Dean Stockwell walking on railroad tracks, each visual element is subjected to two modes of critical examination: one by Berman with his camera and in postproduction, and one by the viewer, where the transmission of images are searched for deeper meaning. The rhythm of Berman's personal brand of montage activates poetic suggestion within irregular sequences and among varied critical modes, triggering associations alongside psycho-physiological “intoxication.”

Perhaps *Aleph*'s most provocative use of rhythm—its greatest suggestion of musical rhythm—can be seen in the film's visual configuration of dance. A variety of identifiable people are shown dancing in filmed footage throughout *Aleph*: one of Berman's friends, the poet DiDi Morrill; audience members dancing in what is likely the recorded production of *The T.A.M.I. Show*; a woman's feet, likely Shirley Berman's (Figure 6.3); and television footage of Russian ballet dancer Rudolph Nureyev and British dancer Margot Fonteyn performing *Swan Lake*. In scenes with Morrill, mostly concentrated near the beginning of *Aleph*, the camera lingers on her face and upper chest and then moves up and down her body, panning quickly as she sways, arms upraised. Morrill dances, much like the other dancing figures in the film, to music the viewer cannot hear. Each of the dancers exists in his/her own world of duration, as each dancer operates at a different speed in the moving image of film. DiDi's dancing is relaxed and casual, intimate in what appears to be a home environment, yet made energetic through Berman's signature jumpy camera movements. This scene contrasts with the frenzied energy of *The T.A.M.I. Show* audience, and then later with the fluid, slow, and graceful movements of Nureyev and Fonteyn. Nevertheless, these figures may also at times seem to dance to the music played on Berman's record player—the music that activates *Aleph* for Berman's living room personal screening viewer—thereby transforming the film into a living, breathing document of personal experience.

One anomaly of rhythm among these dancers, though, is worthy of note. When Nureyev and Fonteyn are seen dancing in the Teth section of the film, they are the only film sequences in *Aleph* that exist in an entirely unique durational mode, due in

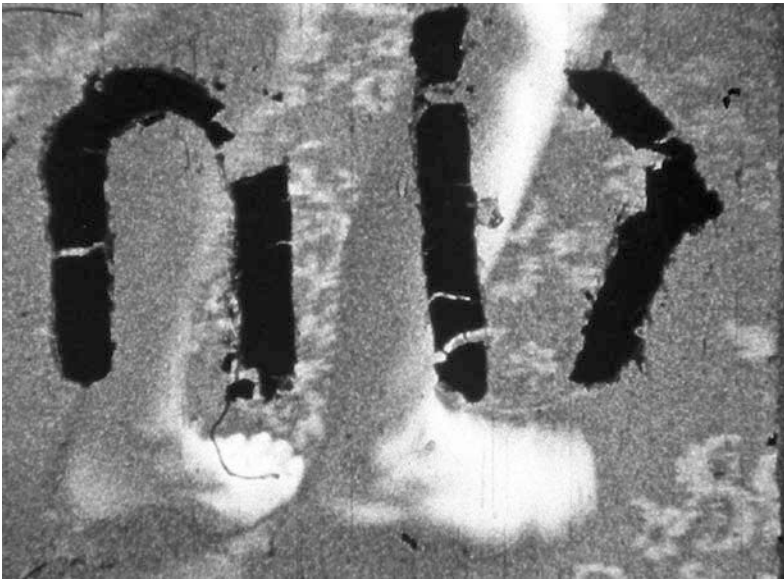


Figure 6.3 Film still of Shirley Berman's feet, *Aleph*, dir. Wallace Berman (1956–66), © Estate of Wallace Berman / Photo Courtesy Anthology Film Archives

part to the original source of the footage: television. Berman filmed the dancers during a television broadcast segment, a fact made apparent by the bands of frequency discrepancy made visible on television screens when filmed through another camera. These television sequences, while brief and fleeting, create their own distinct, smoother, and slower time notation in the film's otherwise quick-paced rhythmical expression. As such, this footage serves as a rhythmical respite, a visual meditation made ethereal or even mystical in the classical form of dance, contrasting with the dense and energetic "beat" of the friends, family, and audience members of Berman's 1950s' and 1960s' rock and jazz.

The "rhythmic pulse" of *Aleph* intertwines directly and viscerally with its "visual intensity."³⁴ The "beat" of the film brings images to life and simulates music and measures of time. The movement of imagery not only emulates a rhythm of music and sound, but also *is* rhythm itself. While the structural form of montage plays a key role in the production of rhythm in *Aleph*, it is not the most fundamental mechanism of rhythm in the medium of film. As experimental filmmaker Peter Kubelka contends, "[C]inema [itself] is not movement. Cinema is a projection of stills—which means images which do not move—in a very quick rhythm."³⁵ How one views a film, then, is ultimately through the framing of rhythm: rhythm both in terms of sound and in terms of vision. In other words, "the image and its duration can never be rendered separately," as rhythm serves to bind them together in filmic experience.³⁶

The thematic and process-based expressions of sound and silence coalesce in the visual forms of sound in *Aleph*, and through the structural and apparatus forms of rhythm, the film is given greater life and movement in evoking the culture of sound in the 1960s. These elements, however, remain short of representing the sounds of *Aleph* without one key understanding: experience. It is in personal screenings of the film—through the combining of all elements of sound, silence, music, and rhythm on film with a literal environment of sound and vision—that the most defining characteristic of the 1960s, the desire for the experiential, comes to fruition.

Papa's Got a Brand New Bag: The (Spontaneous) Experience of Sound in Viewing Wallace Berman's Aleph

When one sat in Wallace Berman's living room watching *Aleph* projected on a wall or on the refrigerator door, one would have heard a wide range of music playing in the background: Edgar Varese, James Brown, Iggy Pop, Moroccan trance music, or perhaps none at all. Each of these experiences with or without music, and each film showing (typically for a small group or one person at a time³⁷), produced a different viewing experience, a different soundtrack, and subsequently, a different mode of understanding the film. As each experience in sound or silence produced a unique experience of the film, a different film was in essence "made" for the viewer each time.

If the history of underground film screenings at the time in California were any indicator, it truly would have been a unique experience watching *Aleph* at Berman's home in the 1960s. Underground films on the West Coast were frequently screened in small galleries and individuals' homes—both places that could offer a venue for

obscure filmmakers to show their work without approval (or, more importantly, without censorship) from mainstream cinemas and box offices. Unlike a movie theater, a home environment also did not place the viewer at one controlled angle to the screen, or restrict one's behavior or movement during a film viewing, allowing each person to more easily experience a relaxed and intimate environment. When Amos Vogel described the generalized film-viewing experience in the early 1970s as "total," "isolating," and "hallucinatory," this reaction was characteristic of, and in some ways critical to, the large-scale cinema viewing that most filmgoers were (and still are) accustomed to.³⁸

In the context of Wallace Berman's home, a person could have a personal experience without suppression of particular senses. David Meltzer gives a very detailed account of the interior of Berman's home in Beverly Glen, describing that there were "mats on the floor and pillows and small mattresses" where people would sit, as well as a low, round table, a cluttered worktable in the corner where Berman would do his art, and a bulletin board filled with images and texts for inspiration.³⁹ Meltzer also noted different "music on the hi-fi" in his description, covering a wide range of music playing in the Berman home at any one time: Bach, Bird Parker, Lester Young, Vivaldi, and Purcell's "Come Ye Sons of Art." Alcohol and marijuana were also present at many get-togethers at the Bermans', and as social life often merged with sharing art, Berman's home functioned as a studio, a screening room, and an artists' retreat from the world.

The home environment of *Aleph* fit into the aesthetics of a loosely defined Beat cinema, which sought to embody "a desire to capture—or re-create—an apparently *spontaneous* cinema."⁴⁰ The screening experience of *Aleph* was likely as unplanned of an event as any other social experience at the Bermans'. Entering his home as a friend, one would likely have hung out with Wallace and perhaps Shirley and Tosh, his son, for some time before being invited to watch the film. Picking out the music he felt like listening to on an intuitive basis, Berman would then have turned on the small 8mm film projector and begun the film.

With the wide range of musical possibilities and tastes available at Wallace's home, viewings of *Aleph* could take many forms. With the piano nocturnes of Bach, the film may have taken on a mellow, holistic expression, while James Brown's song "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" could have brought the "rhythmical pulse" of *Aleph* into an excited animation of pure energy. Depending on the music, one may have gotten lost or overwhelmed in the imagery, or absorbed in the hypnotic stream of a poetic consciousness. Without music, the projector would have been heard "performing" its own rhythmical cadence, ticking through the sprockets to produce its own musical "beat."⁴¹ The film, through variable viewings in Berman's home environment, continually invigorated its own reprocessing and reinvention through music and sound. The vision and sound of *Aleph* become, indeed, integral to one another.

The experience of viewing *Aleph* in the 1960s may be further interpreted within the variety—and ubiquity—of contemporary methods of viewing the film. Even as the film is displayed today—in live showings at Anthology Film Archives or other art-related institutions, on DVD in the *Treasures VI: American Avant-Garde Film, 1947–1986* two-disc box-set, or online on Ubuweb.com or YouTube.com—the

options for personalized and collective display, formats, and environments of viewing expand dramatically. With an option on *Treasures IV* to view *Aleph* either with a specially composed track by jazz musician John Zorn, made after Berman's death, or in its "original silent" form, the DVD viewer can self-curate his or her own viewing experience (or, even more, employ his or her own soundtrack at home through programs such as iTunes or through a stereo system). The implications of these new viewing experiences are too vast and too complex to do full justice here. Yet the origins of *Aleph*'s contemporary large-scale and digital manipulations—in Berman's variable display and constant visual and auditory home "mixing"—presents a unique historical continuation that acknowledges, rather than denies, the film's original context.

Conclusion: The Collision of Beat, Counterculture, and Sound in the 1960s

Wallace Berman—assemblage sculptor, mail artist, collage artist, photographer, poet, and filmmaker—was killed in a car crash by a drunk driver on the eve of his 50th birthday, February 18, 1976. Strangely, Shirley Berman has said that Wallace "knew he was going to die on his fiftieth birthday," a premonition that Wallace had talked about since he was a child.⁴² In a fitting synchronicity to his life, the speech written by the presiding Rabbi for Berman's funeral at Mount Sinai Cemetery was caught in the wind mid-ceremony and blown away, taken on the Aleph breath of the divine.⁴³ It was a moment that captured the loss of organized speech, a play with enigmatic poetry, and a move into inarticulation.

As Tosh Berman most succinctly states, *Aleph* is "full of music."⁴⁴ Yet a profound silence also pervades the film, as it pervaded Berman's life and art. Expressions of both sound and silence permeate the cultural passage between the Beat and counterculture expressions of the entire 1960s and into the early 1970s. Susan Sontag wrote in 1969 that "most valuable art in our time has been experienced by audiences as a move into silence (or unintelligibility, or invisibility or inaudibility) . . . Silence, administered by the artist, is part of a program of perceptual and cultural therapy."⁴⁵ Berman's "program" of silence in his art and in his understanding of the Kabala—in the letter Aleph, the breath before articulation—operated integrally with his conception of sound in the film *Aleph* through the visual transmission of imagery, paint, and Letraset. At a time most known for its sounds, the film's silence, in between and even among the frames, tells its own essential human story in postwar and Vietnam War—era America.

Berman's visual expressions of sound, especially of music, offer forms of counterpoint—simultaneous points of harmony and independence—that interplay with those of silence.⁴⁶ The wild movements of the Rolling Stones footage, the aural qualities of the Hebrew sections, and the visual poetry of Letraset all reflect an interest in popular music culture, spirituality, and the avant-garde literary/poetic followings that flourished in the 1960s. Beginning in the era of bebop, Berman's deep-rooted connection to music may have also provided a therapeutic model for coping with the social and cultural transitions of the two decades. Bob Alexander once said that jazz "saved" him and Berman—that is, saved them not only from themselves,

but also from the pervading haze and conflicted societal pain of the post–World War period.⁴⁷ Additionally, “bebop was clearly integral to the way Berman thought about his art as a social practice.”⁴⁸ The visual components of music and sound through language in *Aleph* represent a distillation of these postwar-era qualities, as *Aleph*’s interrelation of visual and auditory elements moves beyond the conventional possibilities of the medium of film.

The rhythm of *Aleph*, and the viewing of the film with music and sound, likewise binds imagery and the auditory in a syncopated dance of expanded experience, in an age at the brink of a so-called “expanded cinema.” The film’s constant malleability and evolution through distinctive expressions of musical rhythm place it as an object of process, a mutable transmission, by which both vision and sound are more clearly explored. Rhythm and variation are indeed fundamentally at the heart of the personal experience of viewing *Aleph*, both in the past and in the present.

Both music and language find their roots in sound, and as such, language and words play an integral part in the music and conceptions of sound in the 1960s in America. With this decade, historian Charles Kaiser argues, there “would remain a lasting legacy, a culture of sound as well as words.”⁴⁹ In 1969, two years after the love and violence of the summer of 1967, Jim Morrison of The Doors, a band named after the mescaline vision of Aldous Huxley’s book *The Doors of Perception* (1954), declared that “Nothing else can survive a holocaust but poetry and songs.”⁵⁰ It is from the core of poetry and song that the sound of the 1960s was activated, and it is the dialogue of sound and vision that activates the moving image of *Aleph* at the edge of its era, a transmission at the collision of California Beat and countercultural experience.

Notes

* Some of the concepts and content discussed in this chapter were adapted from the author’s Master’s thesis: Chelsea Behle, “Art is Love is God’: Wallace Berman and the Transmission of *Aleph*, 1956–66” (Master’s thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012).

1. The Verifax is a 1940s and 1950s era reprographic printing device that pre-dates the Xerox machine in terms of reproduction technology. Berman used this format later in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s to create layers of collage onto multiple photographic prints.
2. Alberto Cavalcanti, “The Sound Film,” in *The Emergence of Film Art: The Evolution and Development of the Motion Picture As An Art, From 1900 to the Present*, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, 1969), 170.
3. Stan Brakhage, “Letter to Ronna Page (On Music),” in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 135.
4. Ibid., 135.
5. Ibid., 135.
6. Russ Tamblyn’s description in Rebecca Solnit, *Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists of the Cold War Era* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1990), 6, and Walter Hopps, “L.A. c. 1949: Dark Night-Jazz: Prologue,” in *Wallace Berman: Support the Revolution*, ed. Eduardo Lipschutz-Villa et al. (Amsterdam: Institute of Contemporary Art, Amsterdam, 1992), 11.

7. Solnit, 6.
8. Richard Cándida Smith, *Utopia and Dissent: Art, Poetry, and Politics in California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 283.
9. Wallace Berman met Andy Warhol in 1963, when Warhol came to LA for a solo show at the Ferus Gallery, and Warhol even filmed a segment of one of his earliest films, *Tarzan and Jane Regained... Sort Of* (1963), at the Bermans' home in Beverly Glen, with Wallace and his son Tosh as characters in the film. Wallace, therefore, was familiar with Warhol's work and likely knew of it when he began working with the Verifax. Sandra Leonard Starr, *Lost and Found in California: Four Decades of Assemblage Art* (Santa Monica, CA: James Corcoran Gallery, 1988), 110.
10. Cándida Smith, 289.
11. Christopher Knight, "Instant Artifacts: The Art of Wallace Berman," in *Wallace Berman: Support the Revolution*, ed. Eduardo Lipschutz-Villa et al. (Amsterdam: Institute of Contemporary Art, Amsterdam, 1992), 46. Also quoted in Louis Kaplan, "Aleph Beat: Wallace Berman Between Photography and Film," in *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, ed. Karen Beckman and Jean Ma (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 207–208, who states that the radio Verifaxes become "visual transmissions through a sonic medium" when taken into the lens of the Kabala.
12. Solnit, 4.
13. Ibid., 5.
14. Mona Lisa Saloy, "Black Beats and Black Issues," in *Beat Culture and the New America: 1950–1965*, ed. Lisa Phillips et al. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), 155.
15. Ishmael Reed, quoted in Ibid., 155.
16. Ibid., 155.
17. Scott DeVaux, quoted in Ken D. Allan, "City of Degenerate Angels: Wallace Berman, Jazz, and *Semina* in Postwar Los Angeles," *Art Journal* 70, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 81.
18. Allan, 76.
19. A number of texts on Berman cite this fact, but do not elaborate any further (e.g., what album, who produced it, when it happened, etc.), including Solnit, 7.
20. Kaplan, 203.
21. Quote from Kaplan, 203. Reference to *The T.A.M.I. Show* determined by Tosh Berman in Michael Duncan and Kristine McKenna, *Semina Culture: Wallace Berman and his Circle* (New York: D.A.P., 2005), 349, and by David E. James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles*, 278.
22. David Meltzer, "The Door of Heaven, the Path of Letters," in *Wallace Berman: Retrospective, October 24–November 26, 1978*, ed. Hal Glicksman et al. (Los Angeles: Fellows of Contemporary Art, Otis Art Institute Gallery, 1978), 92.
23. Evidence of Beth's place in the Hebrew alphabet is described in a line in the Zohar, commonly known as one of the foundational texts of Jewish Kabbalistic thought: "Aleph, Aleph, *Although I begin the world's creation with Beth, thou will remain the first of my letters.*" Zohar: 1, 3b, quoted in Meltzer, 91.
24. "[Berman] was intrigued by the power of signage itself, both formally and conceptually, as a device capable of cutting through the specific into that open terrain where the viewer has room to bring his own associations into dialogue with the artist." Starr, 15.
25. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, quoted in Stephen Fredman, *Contextual Practice: Assemblage and the Erotic in Postwar Poetry and Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 118, and Stephen Fredman, "Surrealism meets Kabbalah: Wallace Berman and the Semina Poets" in Duncan and McKenna, 47.

26. The original source of this statement is found in Merrill Greene, "Wallace Berman: Portrait of the Artist as an Underground Man" in *Artforum* Vol. 16 (February 1978): 53. The phrase "universal man" comes from an oral history statement by Shirley Berman in Starr, 116.
27. A. E. Waite, ed., *The Book of Formation or Sepher Yetzirah* (Berwick: Ibis Press, 2004), 24.
28. This last phrase echoes the description found on a pamphlet insert included in the issues of *Semina* 4 (1959), Berman's mail art assemblage magazine, showing images of Wallace Berman's "film in progress." This is the first appearance of a direct reference to Berman's film. In a grid of nine "film stills" of "Semina" (the first title of *Aleph*, described only on this pamphlet), only two of the images displayed appear in the film as we see it today. An image of this pamphlet can be seen in Duncan and McKenna, 57.
29. Allen Ginsberg, "Prologue," in *Beat Culture and the New America: 1950–1965*, Lisa Phillips et al., (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), 17.
30. *Ibid.*, 18.
31. "Emotional combinations, not only with the visible elements of the shots, but chiefly with chains of psychological associations [are created with] *Association montage*," Sergei Eisenstein, "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. Sergei Eisenstein and Jay Leyda (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books/The World Publishing Company, 1969), 57. "In cinema, the Russian film-maker Sergei Eisenstein realized that when you put two separate/opposite images together (montage), a new political/poetic meaning comes out of those combined images." Tosh Berman, "Wallace and His Film," in *Wallace Berman: Support the Revolution*, ed. Eduardo Lipschutz-Villa et al. (Amsterdam: Institute of Contemporary Art, Amsterdam, 1992), 74.
32. Claudia Bohn-Spector, "Rearguard Revolutionaries: Wallace Berman and Robert Heinecken," in *Speaking in Tongues: Wallace Berman and Robert Heinecken, 1961–1976*, ed. Claudia Bohn-Spector and Sam Mellon (Pasadena: The Armory Center for the Arts, 2011), 17.
33. Antonin Artaud, "Sorcery and the Cinema," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 49.
34. James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde*, 279.
35. Peter Kubelka, "The Theory of Metrical Film," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 140.
36. Amos Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art* (New York: Random House, 1974), 76. Experiments in the intertwining of sound and visual rhythm are particularly meaningful in the years following *Aleph*, as Structuralist film in America began to take root. American Structuralist film utilized a similar blurring of visual rhythm and auditory rhythm, through a particular form of very rapid montage-like effect called the "flicker." The filmmaker Paul Sharits articulates his early "flicker" films as "filled with attempts to allow vision to function in ways usually particular to hearing." The theoretical basis, for Sharits, is in part a scientific one: "Both light and sound occur in waves... that is, both are primarily vibratory experiences whose 'continuous' qualities are illusional." His primary concern, in essence, is to illustrate the parallel nature of sound and image in order to create a cinema embodying both simultaneously. "What possibilities are there," Sharits posits, "for developing both sound and image from the same structural principle and simply presenting them side-by-side as two equal yet autonomous articulations of one conception?" Paul Sharits, "Hearing:Seeing," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: New York University Press,

- 1978), 256, and Paul Sharits, "Words Per Page," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 262.
37. Berman, 73.
 38. Vogel, 9.
 39. David Meltzer, quoted in Solnit, 9.
 40. Jack Sargeant, *Naked Lens: Beat Cinema* (Berkeley: Soft Skull Press, 2008), 13. Emphasis mine.
 41. "Only a few types of sound can be regarded without doubt as cinematic... [including] the case in which one hears the sound of sprockets acting as a commentary on the length each frame of visual image has in time." Sharits, "Words Per Page," 263.
 42. Solnit, 108.
 43. *Ibid.*, 108.
 44. Berman, 76.
 45. Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," in *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969), 7, 22–23, quoted in Vogel, 106–107.
 46. The primary title of this essay, "Musical and Magical Counterpoint," was a phrase repeated by Berman throughout a series of segmented transcripts from an interview in 1967 in London ("Sandrada" and Tanya Belami, "Transcription from Interview with 'Sandrada,' 1967, London" and "Transcription from Interview with Tanya Belami, 1967, London," in "Wallace Berman Papers." Archives of American Art (AAA), accessed April–May 2011 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, Microfilmed 1988)). Its significance in this context emphasizes that both music and "magic" (in the form of obscure poetic and visual elements, including those arising from the Hebrew Kabala) create counterpoints throughout *Aleph*, as visual and auditory elements synchronize and join together while also remaining distinct and individualized, producing a fluid document representing a transitory phase of American cultural history.
 47. Bob Alexander oral history in Starr, 57.
 48. Allan, 90.
 49. Charles Kaiser, *1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture, and the Shaping of a Generation* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 190.
 50. *Ibid.*, 190. This statement contrasts with Theodor Adorno's infamous line from his 1949 "Cultural Criticism and Society": "Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final state of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today." In the cultural context of World War II, to produce "poetry" was, to Adorno, akin to supporting the cultural structures that produced the Holocaust. Adorno himself later amended this statement in his work *Negative Dialectics*. Theodor W. Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," in *Prisms*, ed. Samuel and Sherry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 17–34.

CHAPTER 7

Guitar Smashing: Gustav Metzger, the Idea of Auto-destructive Works of Art, and Its Influence on Rock Music

Wolfgang Kraushaar

A Conflict at the Monterey Festival (1967)

June 18, 1967, Monterey, California. Behind the scenes of the first great open-air concert, a bitter argument between two rock bands breaks out over the order of the lineup. The Who do not want to go on after the Jimi Hendrix Experience, nor the other way around. The two frontmen, Pete Townshend and Jimi Hendrix, remain intractably opposed. That neither is willing to defer to the other is by no means due only to vanity, but rather a very tangible reason. At the climax and close of their sets, both bands have outrageously dramatic displays of showmanship planned: they want to use their own instruments to destroy their equipment. Clearly, such a spectacle cannot be performed before the same audience twice in one night. In an attempt to find a solution, John Philips of The Mamas and The Papas flips a coin. Hendrix loses and defiantly declares that he will pull out all the stops. What results is one of the most bizarre and sensational performances in the history of rock music.

First, The Who play their set and—as planned—leave their instruments behind as a pile of rubble. The audience goes wild. They are unaware, however, of what still awaits them. Then Jimi Hendrix comes on stage—announced by Brian Jones, the guitarist of the Rolling Stones—decked out like a diva with red velvet pants, a frilly lace shirt, a feather boa and pinned-up hair. Most of the festivalgoers come from San Francisco's hippie scene, the Haight-Ashbury. Hendrix goes off like a fireworks display. With even more virtuosity than usual, he plays “Hey Joe,” “Foxy Lady,” “Can You See Me?,” and the elegiac “The Wind Cries Mary.” The audience

is drawn into his spell. Mama Cass and Janis Joplin are completely ecstatic. Finally, Hendrix strips off his feather boa and launches into his last number, "Wild Thing." He works his Fender Stratocaster with his arm, teeth, and tongue. He plays it on his back and under his knees, rides around on his guitar and does somersaults with it.

Then he starts battering the amplifier. His movements are extremely violent and simultaneously simulate a sex act. Finally, he rams the neck of his guitar into one of the speakers, pulls it out, and throws the damaged instrument onto the stage. His bandmates, Noel Redding on bass and Mitch Mitchell on drums, play on. Then Hendrix kneels down in front of his guitar, sprays it with lighter fluid, and ignites it. Flames shoot up. Hendrix grasps the guitar neck and smashes the still-burning instrument on the floor. As the song disintegrates into a sound collage and dies, he throws the remains into the crowd.

The audience is stunned. The initial excitement has turned into horror. Most of the crowd simply stare towards the stage in a daze, as if unable to understand what has happened. Then the applause begins, hesitantly. As the band leaves the stage, a tumultuous scene takes place. Nico, the German singer of the Velvet Underground, storms up to Hendrix and kisses him. Approving commentaries from some of the festival organizers, roadies, journalists, musicians, and fans can be heard again and again. No one realizes that this show is an allegory of the meteoric rise and fall of a megastar. With Jimi Hendrix, rock music has gained its own unique cult figure and has, at the same time, entered its heroicizing, self-destructive phase. The *Los Angeles Times* writes the following day that when the black singer and guitarist left the stage in Monterey, a rumor had become a legend.

Slowly, Hendrix's contemporaries begin to realize that the dream-like virtuosity of the guitar playing, the movements that border on the acrobatic, the sound patterns distorted with reverb and feedback effects, and the self-directed orgy of destruction represent an attack on the sweetly harmonic pop music embodied in California, above all, by the choral singing of the Beach Boys. Hendrix, who grew up in Seattle, became an exceptional musician after moving to London, where, under the influence of the innovative British music scene, he created a novel fusion of elements from blues, jazz, and rock. Discovered by former Yardbird Chas Chandler in New York, within a few weeks he had developed his own style, and, with his furious riffs, caught the attention of talented British rock guitarists such as Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, and Pete Townshend. Most of them felt like Mike Bloomfield, a young, aspiring American guitarist, who experienced his first Hendrix concert as an encounter with an extra-galactic being: "H bombs were going off, guided missiles were flying—I can't tell you the sounds he was getting out of his instrument . . . I didn't even want to pick up a guitar for the next year."¹ Without a doubt, the metaphor, flawed as it is, suggests what a violent, explosive, and threatening effect the Hendrix sound had, not only on the audience, but especially on many of his colleagues.

When, in August 1969 at Woodstock, Hendrix destroyed "The Star Spangled Banner," the American national anthem, like a counter-cultural protest with unmistakably elegiac, melancholic overtones, he again took up the destruction motif, integrating it into what is probably his most sensational instrumental piece. This time, it was not the guitar that was broken; instead—in an unmistakable

indictment of the Vietnam War—the most important national emblem was demolished.

Despite all the demonstrative virtuosity of the show, Hendrix's name remains inseparably linked, in rock music, to the pleasure of destruction. The audiovisually shocking performance at Monterey, which he was asked again and again—frequently in vain—to repeat, had become fixed in people's mind as the lurid and definitive mental image of the rock idol. His "Smash Hits," the title of one of his LPs, became associated with the image of a guitarist who conformed to a clichéd understanding of rock music as dominated by sensationalism, orgiastic destruction, and vandalism. It was not Jimi Hendrix, however, who introduced the destruction of guitars into rock music, but rather his rival for the privilege of appearing first in Monterey.

Townshend's Inspiration

Like not a few other prominent British rock musicians, Pete Townshend had, before the beginning of his career, started out by studying at art school.² He was particularly interested in works of avant-garde art. It was thus anything but an accident that, in December 1962, he attended a lecture at the Ealing School of Art in London about the relationship between auto-destructive and auto-creative art. The precise topic of the slide lecture was "Auto-Destructive Art, Auto-Creative Art: The Struggle for the Machine Arts of the Future." The speaker was an artist known only in small circles.

Fifty slides in total were shown and discussed that evening. One in particular made a lasting impression on the young art student. It depicted the activity of a Japanese artist. Saburo Murakami, a member of the Gutai Group founded in 1954 in Osaka, was shown jumping, with outstretched arm and clenched fist, through layers of paper. Townshend was especially taken with this pose. Later, hardly a single performance of The Who took place that did not feature him jumping around the stage with his arm stretched into the air. Their guitarist's dramatic self-presentation quickly became one of the hallmarks of this eccentric band, which emerged from the mod scene in Britain.

Numerous legends exist about how his stage performance escalated from the destruction of instruments to demolition of the entire set. One of these stories claims that, "During a gig at the Marquee, Townshend managed to snap the neck of his guitar on a low ceiling. When the audience failed to react, he went into a rage and smashed the ruined instrument to pieces on stage. Keith Moon joined in, kicking over his drum kit, and the audience went wild with delight. A new stage act was born."³

Townshend himself offers an entirely different account. In an interview, he refers to the lecture at the Ealing School of Art and explains: "I was doing my first gig with The Who and took it as an excuse to smash my new Rickenbacker that I had just hocked myself to the eyebrows to buy. I really believed it was my responsibility to start a rock band that would last only three months, an auto-destructive group. The Who would have been the first punk band except that we had a hit."⁴ According to Townshend, auto-destruction rather than destruction was the primary motive. The Who were conceived as a band with a kind of built-in expiration date.

The plan was for them to exist for a limited amount of time only. The idea reveals what a strong impression the concept of auto-destructive artwork must have made on Townshend at the time. Such an idea seemed to him to be exemplary for a genuinely contemporary rock band.

Metzger's Idea of Auto-Destructive Art

The inspiration for Townshend's destruction scenarios was the then-36-year-old artist Gustav Metzger, a German-Jewish refugee who had lost most of his relatives in Auschwitz and other concentration camps. Metzger, whom the guitarist of The Who has described as his "hero,"⁵ had primarily made a name for himself with several manifestos on auto-destructive art. Today he is considered—and not only in Britain—the originator of this paradoxical form of art. His first manifesto, published on November 4, 1959, reads: "Self-destructive painting, sculpture and construction is a total unity of idea, site, form, color, method, and timing of the disintegrative process. . . . Auto-destructive paintings, sculptures, and constructions have a life time varying from a few moments to twenty years. When the disintegrative process is complete the work is to be removed from the site and scrapped."⁶ Metzger attached great importance to being able to show such works of art in public spaces—even, if possible, outdoors. He considers studio art created by artists working in isolation an abomination. Viewers should have access to his works without having to pay for it. A work of art should not become an object of the market, to be either bought or sold.

November 4, 1959, as Metzger later repeatedly emphasized, had been for him a "point of no return."⁷ Since then, he had never stopped reflecting on the idea of auto-destructive art. Only a few months later, he presents his second manifesto. In the "Manifesto of Auto-destructive Art" published on March 10, 1960, he makes an explicit reference to missiles and nuclear weapons. "Auto-destructive art," it reads, "re-enacts the obsession with destruction, the pummeling to which individuals and masses are subjected. Auto-destructive art demonstrates man's power to accelerate disintegrative processes of nature and to order them. Auto-destructive art mirrors the compulsive perfectionism of arms manufacture—polishing to destruction point. Auto-destructive art is the transformation of technology into public art. . . . Auto-destructive art is art which contains within itself an agent which automatically leads to its destruction within a period of time not to exceed twenty years."⁸ At the end of his manifesto, he sets out a list of materials and techniques to be used in the production of auto-destructive art.

Five days later, the *Daily Express* publishes Metzger's first model of an auto-destructive sculpture. On June 22, 1960, he carries out his first presentation in London's Temple Gallery. He uses a brush to apply a solution to nylon fabric, which quickly dissolves before his audience's eyes. He calls his auto-destructive act of art an "aesthetics of revulsion." Metzger conducts what is presumably his most effective public demonstration on July 3, 1961, on the South Bank of London. Protected by a gas mask, he sprays hydrochloric acid onto three red, black, and white nylon canvases, which are framed on a structure of metal pipes. Bit by bit, the fabric disintegrates, falling off in shreds, until it dissolves completely. The entire event lasts less than half an hour.

A few days earlier, Metzger had published his third manifesto, titled “Auto-Destructive Art, Machine Art, Auto-Creative Art.” In it, he explicitly establishes for the first time, as the title already indicates, a relationship between auto-destructive and auto-creative art. The goal is to create, with the help of computers, works of art whose movement is programmable and therefore includes a kind of self-regulation. Finally, he expresses his political credo: “Auto-destructive art is an attack on capitalist values and the drive to nuclear annihilation.”⁹

He puts forth a fourth manifesto during the Cuban missile crisis of October 7, 1962. It carries the title “Manifesto World” and begins in a darkly apocalyptic tone with the words: “everything everything everything everything A world on edge of destruction. Objects become precious, matter becomes subject to feeling of reverence. This is an art form for artists. The mass of people appreciate Modern art 50 years after its practice. This art form will not be subject to this time lag since it is unlikely that in 50 years’ time there will be a world in which to practice it.”¹⁰ A fifth manifesto, “On Random Activity in Material,” in which he attempts to precisely define the role of the aleatory in the auto-destructive process, follows on July 30, 1964. It is the last in Metzger’s series.¹¹

The Historical Context: Metzger’s Biography

If one takes a closer look at the man who questioned concepts of art so radically in the early 1960s, the dramatic links between his life and work quickly become apparent.¹² His efforts to reclaim the historical legitimacy of works of art are founded on the question of whether, after Auschwitz and Hiroshima, it is still possible to create aesthetic objects whose form has not already been denied by the course of history. Metzger’s paradoxical desire to produce works of art that self-destruct reveals the scope of his undertaking: the aim is to integrate modernity’s potential for destruction into the object to be created in order to initiate a process that successively dissolves the object and thus demonstrates the temporality of its existence. The obliteration of the aesthetic object mirrors the existential threat to the artist, who has survived Auschwitz but can never be free of it in his “afterlife.” It reflects his experience of having evaded a threat to his own life, while perceiving that threat as one shared with the entire human species. As if subject to some perpetual impulse to repeat, he reenacts in the aesthetic sphere what, in his own life, has been burned onto his body.

Gustav Metzger owes his survival to a rescue mission of the Refugee Children Movement,¹³ through which he, together with his older brother Max, was brought to England in January 1939. Metzger, born in 1926 in Nuremberg, was the fifth child of an orthodox Jewish family, the youngest son of a grocer who had migrated, together with his wife, from Poland to Germany in 1918. Both brothers were able, at the last moment, to escape the city, the site of Nazi Party rallies. Their father and two sisters had already been deported back to Poland three weeks before the pogrom of November 9–10, 1938. The majority of their family members, including their mother, who followed her husband in 1939, were murdered in the Nazi extermination camps.

Together with his brother Max, Gustav is first placed in a home for refugee children in London. In September 1941, he begins an apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker in Leeds, but his training ends after a year because of the effects of the war. He works temporarily as a carpenter, gardener, and farmer, but his real interest is already modern art. With increasing curiosity, he visits exhibitions of works by artists such as Henry Moore, Graham Sutherland, Paul Nash, and others. The year 1944 marks an important experience; while working on farms near Bristol, Metzger lives in a kind of political commune. The other members are Trotskyites and anarchists. During this period, in which he becomes acquainted with the texts of psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, controversial for his theory of sexual liberation, he begins to make his first small objects. He contacts Henry Moore, seeking a job as his assistant, and Moore suggest he should attend art school. This advice would soon signify a biographical crossroads.

Together with his brother, who had already begun studying art in Leeds, Metzger enrolls in drawing courses in January 1945 and spends six months at the Cambridge School of Art. In the autumn, they move to London and attend the Sir John Cass School of Art in Aldgate and evening classes at Borough Polytechnic. Both brothers are awarded scholarships in 1946, enabling them to pursue their studies of painting techniques, sculpture, and art history more systematically. In 1948, Gustav Metzger shows his work for the first time in exhibitions at the Ben Uri Art Gallery and the London Academy Hall. His work in this phase is heavily influenced by David Bomberg, an artist whose own work is focused on cubism. In the same year, he undertakes a three-month study tour of the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, traveling with an identity card for stateless persons. After receiving a scholarship from the Jewish community of Antwerp, he attends the Academy of Fine Arts there for three semesters.

Metzger's development as an artist continues in the years that follow, as he alternates between art school and study tours. In 1953, he is a co-founder of the Borough Bottega group and organizes its first exhibition at London's Berkeley Galleries. In the same year, he relocates to King's Lynn in Norfolk. There he becomes increasingly engaged in political issues, finding the arms race between East and West particularly troubling, as well as the atomic weapons tests carried out by the British government. In 1957, Metzger establishes, with other opponents of the arms race, the King's Lynn Committee for Nuclear Disarmament and takes part in two marches to occupy missile bases in North Pickenham in December 1958.

When he returns to London six months later, his activities now have a dual impetus; his artistic interests have, to a considerable extent, merged with his political aims. While writing his manifesto on auto-destructive art, he continues participating in the anti-nuclear protest movement. In autumn 1960, he is a cofounder of the Committee of 100, which counted among its most prominent members Nobel Laureate Bertrand Russell. In September 1961, he is arrested for taking part in a demonstration and forced to spend a month in prison in Staffordshire. It is doubtless anything but a coincidence that the intellectual basis for Metzger's auto-destructive artwork was born in the wake of this growing nuclear threat and in the context of his own political activities as part of the British peace movement.

The “Destruction in Art Symposium” in London (1966)

As a person and as an artist, Metzger is undoubtedly a loner. In many ways he is a modern nomad: enterprising, imaginative, and agile. He is the first to have focused his artistic work, with an almost overwhelming rigorousness, on the motif of destruction. He is, however, far from being the only one.

In the avant-garde movements of the 1960s, destructive art played a remarkable and, in some ways, even spectacular, role. Most important among the artists experimenting with such art forms was the Swiss artist Jean Tinguely, who, in March 1960, set a large, self-destructing machine in motion in the New York Museum of Art under the title, “Homage to New York.” There were also the cut canvases of Lucio Fontana, the Fire Paintings by Yves Klein, the “Car Crash” paintings by Andy Warhol, the Shooting Paintings of Niki Saint Phalle, Yoko Ono’s “Cut Pieces” as an invitation to viewers to cut the clothes off her body, the “happenings” of Wolf Vostell, Günter Brus’s ritualistic self-mutilation, and also the exceedingly ambivalent laceration pieces of Hermann Nitsch and the other Vienna Actionists.

Metzger followed these parallel, at times competing movements from a distance but with sympathy and always with great interest. When the documentation for the exhibition “Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme,”¹⁴ published in 1965 in German by Rowohlt Verlag falls into his hands, the idea of organizing an international conference on destructive art occurs to him. He takes the initiative, establishes a committee, becomes its secretary, and begins with the practical preparations in the spring of 1966. Metzger draws on the Rowohlt volume for most of the participants’ names. The event takes place in the fall of 1966.

On September 9, the “Destruction in Art Symposium” opens in London’s Africa Centre on King Street. It lasted for three days, with between 120 and 150 people taking part. On the first day, after Gustav Metzger’s introduction, Ivor Davies, Dom Sylvester Houédard, and Jean-Jacques Lebel lecture on various aspects of auto-destructive art. “U.S. Surpasses all Nazi Genocide Records!,” a pamphlet by George Maciunas attacking US warfare in Vietnam, is distributed.¹⁵ Based on statistics, Maciunas had come to the conclusion that the United States, with their operations in Southeast Asia, had exceeded the devastating effects of the German *Wehrmacht* during the Second World War. The second day also begins with a speech by Metzger on “The Scientific Destruction of Science and Technology.” Lectures followed from John Latham, Garry A. Jones, and Anthony Scott, as well as a message from Simon Vinkenoog on behalf of the Dutch Provo movement. At the evening event, moderated by Jean-Jacques Lebel, the Vienna Actionists are the sole contributors and make their first international appearance. The art critic Peter Weibel speaks about “Film, Division of Labour and Art” before Otto Mühl and Günter Brus, ignoring the unspoken agreement to only read texts, perform various works of phonetic action art. The group’s appearance, which attracted the greatest attention when several films by Kurt Kren showing Otto Mühl’s action art were screened, ends with a contribution by Hermann Nitsch. On the third and final day, performance artist Ralph Oritz and psychologist Joseph Berke, the latter from Ronald D. Laing’s circle, speak, before Juan Hidalgo, Robin Page and Oritz hold a debate on the topic “To Kill

or Not to Kill.” The final event, headed by Ivor Davies, opens with a presentation by Guy Pro-Diaz, whose experiments with explosives had generated quite a buzz. Next, the Japanese performance artist Yoko Ono, together with her first husband, Anthony Cox, reads excerpts from their book “Lecture in the Dark,” dancer Barbara Gladstone speaks on the destructive aspects of ballet, and Biff Stevens discusses the “Pneumatic Environment” he had built in Battersea Park. The symposium ends with John Sharkey’s review of the entire event.

The symposium received considerable coverage in the national and international press, probably not least due to the backdrop formed by protests against the continually escalating Vietnam War. An action by Hermann Nitsch, however, had unpleasant repercussions. The organizers of the symposium were accused of planning and implementing an “indecent exhibition contrary to the common law.” In July 1967, Metzger was sentenced to a fine of £100, while his co-organizer Sharkey was conditionally acquitted.

At the same time, destructive art, and specifically the motif of guitar destruction, played a certain role in a film by the Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni. Filmed in the summer of 1966 and premiered on December 18 in New York, *Blow-Up* would soon become a cult film; in May 1967, it won the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival. The film tells the story of a young photographer, Thomas (played by David Hemmings), who comes to believe that, in random pictures he took in a park, traces of a murder can be seen, the details of which elude him the more he tries to uncover them. The film, taken with the bright candy colors of 1960s pop culture, reflects like few others the lifestyle of “Swinging London.” In one scene, as Thomas moves through the alleys and backyards of the city, he is magically drawn to a noise. As he opens the door to a club, he finds himself amidst a concert audience entranced by the performance of a rock band, The Yardbirds, considered to be a crucible of British rock talent, with Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page (later the lead guitarist of Led Zeppelin) all passing through the band’s ranks. At the end of the song “Stroll On,” Jeff Beck, for no apparent reason, smashes his guitar. With this act of extreme aggression, the audience is awakened from their trance and begins to fight over the remains of the instrument. Thomas is the quickest, however, and snatches the body of the guitar, defends it from the attacks of others, and runs away with it. Shortly thereafter, however, he seems to have lost interest in this fetish object and throws it away in an alley with ostentatious disdain.

The motif of destruction would again play a prominent role in Antonioni’s next film, *Zabriskie Point*, which premiered in New York in February 1970. Against the background of campus revolts in California, the activities of the Black Panthers, and the protests against the Vietnam War, it follows the flight through the desert of a young man, Mark, and his encounter with a young woman, Daria, who is also fleeing, in Death Valley. Zabriskie Point is the name of a site in Death Valley with a panoramic view of the entire area. In the closing sequence—Mark has meanwhile been shot by the police at an airport in Los Angeles—a villa, perched on a rock at the edge of the desert, explodes before Daria’s eyes. In a series of slow-motion sequences shot from different camera angles accompanied by the music of Pink Floyd, the film shows the building, its furniture and fixtures, refrigerators, televisions, books,

bottles, jars, cans, food—the entire consumer world—is thrown up in an azure-blue sky, raining down in a myriad of shattered objects. Like a unique collage of intoxicating images and sound, the explosion seems to be no less than an orchestral final chord to the hybrid history of modern civilization. The everyday violence that was exploding at the time in riots in American suburbs is transformed under Antonioni's gaze into an orgy of destruction on a gigantic scale.

The Auto-destructive Artwork

Art historian Justin Hoffmann, author of the most important monograph on the topic of destructive art in the German-speaking world,¹⁶ has attempted to mark the differences between this phenomenon, which emerged simultaneously in many Western countries in the 1960s, and other forms of destruction in art. In doing so, he distinguishes between iconoclasm; attacks on art [*der Kunstattentat*]; the generally conventional, naturalistic depictions of destruction in painting; and modern collages composed of fragments and waste objects, which he described as the integration of found and destroyed items. Destructive art, in contrast, claims to be a new, previously unknown form of art. "Destructive art differs fundamentally from both destructive acts (iconoclasm—collective, attacks on art—individual) that are not aimed at producing an artistic result as well as works of art that are not the result of the destructive actions of the artist but that merely depict destruction, or include things destroyed by another hand as an element."¹⁷ Accordingly, the specific nature of destructive art is located at the point where it seeks, in a paradoxical way, to do something creative, or at least transcend the merely destructive. This is especially true for Metzger's idea of auto-destructive artworks, which he increasingly and characteristically tried to complement with a dimension of auto-creativity.

Anyone attempting to approach Metzger's idea conceptually must first come to terms with its decisive characteristic. Auto-destructive artworks contradict classical artistic claims to timelessness; they are objects with a limited lifespan. Their existence is temporary. Seneca's exclamation, "*ars longa, vita brevis*,"¹⁸ emblazoned on classical art like a secret dictum, is overridden. Art, in this case, is even shorter than life.

The "death" of such works occurs neither abruptly nor suddenly, however, but rather as part of a process, in a predictable manner. The viewer who attends the process of dissolution, disintegration, or destruction, witnesses the work of art's slow "withering away." Before this process is underway, it is not yet an artwork but simply a "dead" object. The auto-destructive artwork constitutes itself in its passing; it has a temporal matrix. It is nothing outside of this destructive-productive moment. Its existence inheres in the newly manifested forms created out of its disintegration. The before and after are only different states of its nonexistence, the former in the form of an object, the latter as ash, powder, or no longer definable residue.

This process is usually set in motion by an impulse; the artist's active oversight of the entire process is more of an exception. The destruction takes place with a minimum of outside influence or control. Instead, the random nature of events is foregrounded. While it is clear from the start that the procedure will end in the dissolution of the artwork, what configurations the work of art will generate along the way is nevertheless not predetermined.

Temporalization, transformation, and dematerialization can be considered basic categories of auto-destructive artworks. The radical temporalization of the aesthetic object is the prerequisite for determining all other attributes.¹⁹ The ongoing conversion of the object's form of appearance is the unwritten law of its existence. And this reduction, the almost complete disappearance of the original object, constitutes the essence of this seemingly paradoxical conception of art.

The role of the artist is not unaffected by the contradictory nature of the auto-destructive artwork, however. The auto-destructive artist has very little in common with the classical understanding of an artist as a person who creates an aesthetic object that he has labored to form. He is not a true creator, but has rather withdrawn, in his role as an artist, to the extreme. He is reduced to the role of an arranger and generator of the destructive impulse. While he has created an initial structure capable of triggering an automatic movement, he has not made an object expressing, in its formal composition, the intention of its creator. What the auto-destructive work of art reveals, in the initial stage of its proto-destructive construction, is no more than a basic condition of its procedural self-negation. In this respect, the artist merely sets the work of art in motion. It moves by itself and, in so doing, takes on its own, unexpected forms. An art that "automatically leads to its own destruction" undoubtedly stands the traditional conception of art on its head. For many observers, auto-destructive art is a provocation—for some, even a shock. They refuse to perceive the destructive act as anything other than the wanton destruction of materials, mechanisms, or entire machine-like structures. The idea, however, that the sabotage of traditional forms of art might be the only remaining possibility to secure a future for art, beyond its commercialization and relegation to museums, is not usually considered.

Gustav Metzger's life history virtually compels us to consider the connection between his work and his biography. It seems self-evident that auto-destructive art can be perceived "as the radical consequence of the experience of an inhuman and murderous ideology, of the persecution and exile of Polish Jews expelled from Germany."²⁰ Yet it would be too simple to view the auto-destructive artwork as a reflection of the trauma of a persecuted man or some kind of theatrical-symbolic reproduction of modernity's self-destructive tendencies. Following Adorno's dictum that "[t]o write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,"²¹ some artists have grappled with the question of whether, after the Holocaust, it might be morally objectionable to continue producing art. For Metzger, who has apparently met this challenge again and again, there is a clear response, delivered in a statement that comes close to being an activist gesture: "For me, the answer to the question 'Can there be poetry after Auschwitz?' is not only 'Yes, there can,' but 'there must'—in order to counter this horror."²² His conception of auto-destructive art is not intended to be a representation nor is it meant to be reflexive or symbolic; it is rather the attempt of art, after Auschwitz and Hiroshima, to reclaim its territory. Only by integrating humanity's enormous destructive potential, a potential that has become obvious in the twentieth century, into the work of art—this is, apparently Metzger's hope—can the artist free it from

its involuntary ideological tendencies and thus realize its autonomy, which is indispensable for his production.

The “Art-Strike” and the Odd Man Out

By the end of 1966, Metzger is increasingly in contact with the innovative British rock scene. Word has gotten around among the budding pop stars that the artist with the “outsider” image had been experimenting with liquid crystal projections that could be suitable for putting on light shows at rock concerts. While this may simply seem like an optical effect on stage, it is, for Metzger, a logical development of his ideas on auto-destructive art. He is particularly interested in visualizing the auto-destructive process. To this end he had projected, in a 1963 Bartlett Society presentation at the University of London, what happens when a scrap of nylon stretched across a slide frame is dissolved by acid. These demonstrations become increasingly effective visual scenarios and ultimately monstrous visualizations, soon to be referred to as “light shows.”

The liquid crystal projections, for which Metzger obtains the help of a friend with the necessary expertise, were based on a relatively simple method: “The principle of liquid crystal projection technology is based on thin glass slides that contain liquid crystals, are heated, and inserted into projectors with polarizing filters on their lenses. The resulting image is projected onto a screen. As the crystals cool, their color changes from black (in the hottest stage) to gray, eventually mixing with every color of the spectrum—from green to yellow, purple, red, blue, and pink—and turning into an infinite, endless number of combinations.”²³ It is obvious why rock musicians are drawn to these kinds of projections: they translate the sonic experience into permanently evolving, color-saturated images that generate a dream-world, similar to the visual effects that can be experienced under the influence of drugs. If guitar demolition represents the auto-destructive side of Metzger’s conception of contemporary art, then its auto-creative side is undoubtedly expressed in liquid crystal projections.

The time is ripe on the last two days of 1966. Metzger presents his liquid crystal projections as a “light show” at a major concert at the London Roundhouse. The evening begins with a performance by the Cream, the band featuring Eric Clapton, Ginger Baker, and Jack Bruce that changed not only changed their audience’s listening habits but also transcended the standard two-and-a-half minute format of hit singles with their improvised blues-rock. Throughout the evening, Metzger projects his spectrally-colored images on the rear wall of the stage to songs such as “Wrapping Paper,” “Cat’s Squirrel,” “I’m So Glad,” and “I Feel Free.” The audience is fascinated by the psychedelic effects. Constantly merging and diverging air bubbles, a kind of liquid mobile, are created, opening up a new realm of imagination for the crowd.

In contrast to the first evening, the planned climax on New Year’s Eve fails due to technical problems. As The Who, coming on after Pink Floyd, begin their performance, half of the six projectors are inoperative. Some parts had been removed from them; Metzger suspects an act of sabotage. Since the stage is now so dark that the musicians are barely visible, the house lights are turned on, which in turn eliminates the effect of the three still-functioning projectors. The magical atmosphere

generated by the balloon-like, colored images is gone. Townshend is furious with Metzger and calls him a failure. For very different reasons, Metzger finds the performance by The Move problematic. Their show begins with a car being wheeled in, carrying three young women in various states of undress. After they get out of the car, several men with big hammers smash the car into bits in a menacing din. Metzger utterly disapproves of this demolition act, which he sees as reducing his idea of auto-destruction to nothing more than a cheap joke. Although he is subsequently asked to conduct other light projections, he gives up such activities. Mark Boyle, one of his younger colleagues, takes up the concept and thus accompanies Soft Machine, a band who took their name from a book by William Burroughs and the first British group to be labeled as “psychedelic,” on an international tour.

Four years later, Metzger demonstrates what a premeditated, artistic attack on a car might look like. For the opening of the exhibition “Kinetics” in September 1970, he has a car drive through London with a transparent plastic box attached to the roof. The engine emissions are collected in the box by means of a tube connected to the exhaust. Soon, it gathers ugly drops, gradually darkening the container. The toxic secretions, normally invisible, are thus presented in concentrated form before the public’s eyes. The auto action is entitled “Mobile.” Metzger considers this object to be a kind of kinetic sculpture and his contribution to the exhibition.

Environmental degradation caused by increasing automotive traffic is a motif that progressively preoccupies him. When he is invited to the 1972 *Documenta* exhibition in Kassel, he develops a project that cannot be realized. Under the title “Stockholm June” he proposes another. What is meant by the title is explained in the exhibition catalog: “Phase 1. 120 cars are arranged next to one another around a rectangular building 2.5 to 4 meters high, whose sides are made of clear plastic. The plastic is perforated at regular intervals to let out the exhaust gases. The exhaust gases of all the cars will be directed to the inside of the structure. The motors will run from early morning to late evening. Phase 2. On the eve of the 14th, all of the cars will be brought into the building, lined up neatly in a row on the sides, and filled with gasoline, and their motors will be started. The structure is covered with an unperforated plastic bag and sealed. If, by noon of the 15th, the cars have not gone up in flames, small bombs are thrown into the sculpture.”²⁴ Two photomontages are shown next to the text. The project is not realized in Kassel or in Stockholm, the site of an exhibition for which it was originally planned.

Another failure has even greater negative impacts and ultimately drives him deeper into isolation. When seven German artists, including Joseph Beuys, Hans Haacke, and Klaus Stack, are featured in the exhibition “Art into Society / Society into Art,” Metzger, in a contribution to the catalog under the heading “Years without Art, 1977–1980,” calls for a three-year art strike.²⁵ Because he fears that the subversive power of art will be neutralized by its increasing integration into the commercial market, he wants to convince his colleagues to abstain completely from the production and presentation of art from 1977 to 1980. He also sees this boycott, which is directed against the art establishment, as an opportunity for a creative pause, during which artists should renew their thinking about their work and discuss these thoughts with one another. This extremely naïve proposal proves to be a disaster. None of his colleagues support him. Even those who sympathize with

Metzger's ideas shy away from such a radical step that might endanger their already limited incomes.

As a result of the failed "art strike," Metzger's activities take a different direction, eventually leading him back to Germany in the late 1970s. An important aspect of this move was undoubtedly his increasing preoccupation with Nazi art. In September 1976, he organized, with Cordula Frowein, the "Art in Germany under National Socialism" symposium in London. The following year he took part in a conference conducted by the Museum of History in Frankfurt on "Fascism—Art and Visual Media."

The Rediscovery

In the 1980s, Metzger's retreat from the London scene meant that he had increasingly faded into obscurity. In 1987, he began doing research at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research in preparation for an exhibition showing book covers from the immediate postwar period, when printed matter still had to be licensed by the occupying forces. After a while, however, this project turns out to be infeasible.

A turning point is reached in 1993 when the Barbican Art Gallery in London opens its exhibition "The Sixties: Art Scene in London," including documents on the development of auto-destructive art. Then, in March 1995, Metzger gives a lecture titled "Auto-Destructive Art and the Twentieth Century," followed in September by a solo exhibition with the title "Damaged Nature—Two New Works and Documents" in the bookstore workfortheeyetodo. At the same time, he also attracts growing interest from new British artists, who view the protagonist of destructive art as a kind of role model. Some of the "Young British Artists," headed by Damien Hirst, who are attracting attention internationally with their exhibitions and projects, publicly declare Metzger to be their "Dad."

Following his surprising rediscovery in Britain, the land where he found refuge, in the autumn of 1997, Metzger's work is shown for the first time in Germany in a retrospective solo exhibition bearing his name at the Munich Kunstraum. It is curated by the art historian Justin Hoffmann, who had written his doctoral thesis on destructive art. A year later, another solo exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford presents Metzger's work. He also takes part in the collaborative project "Dream City" in Munich in the spring of 1999, and his work is shown in summer 1999 at the Nuremberg Kunsthalle under the patronage of his former "student," Pete Townshend.

His work in Munich bears the double title "*Travertin / Judenpech*" (Travertine / Unlucky Jews); it is one of his most impressive projects. The title alludes to a building material preferred by the Nazis, one that had to come from within the German Reich, and, by contrast, an openly anti-Semitic expression for asphalt. Metzger covers the sixty square meters of stone floor directly in front of the exhibition entrance with tar, making a kind of "asphalt carpet." Describing his installation, originally planned for the Munich Feldherrnhalle,²⁶ he says, "The material tar was once also called '*Judenpech*.' And unlucky Jews are also the outcome of Hitler's megalomania. I come here now as a poor, dirty Jew [*Saujude*] from another country and dare to do something that, for most of the population, is probably unwelcome."²⁷ In another

interview, he sheds further light on his personal motives for the project: “My deepest experience in Nuremberg was knowing that, as a Jew, I could never go to the theater. I walked past it, could look at the promotional photos, but would always remain outside, on the edge. And here I remain, outside, on the threshold of the house of art. But today I can change things; at the time, I could not. I can make an intervention on this magnificent building. This is also an intervention in history.”²⁸ In the course of all those years, the loner has not given up, and now he demonstrates remarkable self-confidence.

In a glowing portrait, the journalist Nicola Kuhn writes, “The small, almost gnome-like man remains a phenomenon. For decades, no one asked after him; in catalogs it was always ‘the artist’s whereabouts remain unknown.’ But suddenly he enjoys cult status as he did in the sixties, is in demand on the lecture circuit, and even has exhibitions again. The retrospective at the Oxford Museum of Modern Art is regarded as the definitive return of an artist who is defiant to the end. The recreation of once-developed works is less a belated attempt to relaunch his career than, above all, a tribute to the present generation’s interest in a tireless artist with a political agenda and the art of his early years.”²⁹ Metzger, who says of himself that he sometimes feels like a “voice crying in the wilderness,” is also now no longer unknown on the East and West Coasts of the United States. His especially strong presence on the Internet should ensure that his unintentional career will progress even further.

The Rock Museum in Seattle

June 23, 2000; Seattle, Washington, the port city on the Pacific Coast, near the Canadian border. A unique rock museum, the “Experience Music Project,” opens with a grand pop concert. With a floor plan covering over 13,000 square meters, it not only features relics from five decades of popular music but also offers visitors a museum exhibit guide with audio samples featuring instruments, pieces of music, and individual artists and even access to virtual spaces.³⁰ In a centrally located “sky church,” computer animations display popular pieces from the history of rock music every hour, and in a separate “sound lab,” visitors with little or no musical knowledge can begin creating their own compositions.

The idea for the project came from 47-year-old computer billionaire Paul Allen, who retired several years ago from the software giant Microsoft. He has influenced the design of the multimedia park not only with his technological knowledge, but his musical tastes as well. Architect Frank Gehry has designed a steel building in the shape of a smashed guitar to house the museum, intended as a tribute to Jimi Hendrix—next to Bill Gates the most famous son of this northwestern city—who died in 1970. Describing the museum as architecturally congealed destructive art thus seems fitting in a dual sense.

A total of 80,000 works are in the museum’s collection—from Bob Dylan’s harmonica to Janis Joplin’s feather boa to the fragments of the Fender Stratocaster that Jimi Hendrix smashed at one of his performances, on June 4, 1967 at London’s Saville Theatre. Allen’s original plan—he had merely wanted to build a kind of electronic mausoleum for Hendrix—had to be abandoned because a lack of cooperation with

Hendrix's heirs proved difficult. Gustav Metzger's thoughts on this gigantic shrine to pop music are not known. It would not be surprising to hear him express his concern that the idea for the building was based on a misunderstanding. He might argue that the shape of the destroyed guitar reveals that the difference between destruction and auto-destruction had not been understood. The self-destruction of an artwork is at the same time a creative process.

To destroy an instrument, in contrast, is neither art in the practical nor the figurative sense. His idea of auto-destructive artwork could thus have nothing to do with constructing a building in the petrified shape of an electric guitar's torso.

Notes

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1. From Michael Bloomfield, "Michael Bloomfield Reminisces," in *Guitar Player*, September 1975, as quoted in Harry Shapiro and Caesar Glebbeek, *Jimi Hendrix: Electric Gypsy* (1990) new and improved ed. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 104.
2. Cf. Jonathan Jones, "Schools of Thought" in *The Observer* March 18, 2000. In it, British art schools are referred to as "engines of our counterculture."
3. Patrick Neylan-Francis, "The Who" in *Rock: The Rough Guide*, 2nd ed., eds. Jonathan Buckley, Orla Duane, Mark Ellingham, and Al Spicer (online) (London: The Rough Guides, 1999), 1083.
4. Jones, "Schools of Thought."
5. Cf. "Miles Interviews Pete Townshend," *International Times*, February 13, 1967.
6. Gustav Metzger, "Auto-Destructive Art" (1959) in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, eds. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 401.
7. *Translator's Note*: In English in the original.
8. Gustav Metzger, "Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art" (1960) in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, eds. Stiles and Selz, 402.
9. Gustav Metzger, "Auto-Destructive Art, Machine Art, Auto-Creative Art" (1961) in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, eds. Stiles and Selz, 402.
10. Gustav Metzger, "Manifesto World" (1962) in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, eds. Stiles and Selz, 403.
11. See Gustav Metzger, "On Random Activity in Material/Transforming Works of Art" (1964) in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, eds. Stiles and Selz, 404.
12. On Gustav Metzger's biography, see especially Astrid Bowron, "Ein Schnitt entlang der Zeit – Versuch einer Biographie" in the catalog *Gustav Metzger: Ein Schnitt entlang der Zeit* eds. Kunsthalle Nürnberg (Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 1999), 47–63.
13. *Translator's Note*: i.e., *Kindertransport*.
14. Jürgen Becker and Wolf Vostell, eds., *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Realism: Eine Dokumentation* (Reinbek: Rowohlt Vlg., 1965).
15. George Macunias, "U.S. Surpasses all Nazi Genocide Records" in *Fluxus, etc.: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection Catalog*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Bloomfield Hills, MI: Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, 1981), 390.
16. Justin Hoffmann, *Destruktionskunst. Der Mythos der Zerstörung in der Kunst der frühen sechziger Jahre* (München: Vlg. Silke Schreiber, 1995).

17. Ibid., 16.
18. *Translator's Note*: "Art is long, life is short."
19. In an interview, Metzger stressed the centrality of this point of view in his own way: "Time is at the very center of the idea. Time and a way of demonstrating it. Demonstrating time. Showing time. Getting people involved with time. That is at the center of it all. In that sense it relates to music and to dance." (Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Metzger's Quest for Social Change: From the Auto-destructive Art Manifesto and Onwards" in *Art Orbit 4* (February 1999): <http://www.artnode.se/artorbit/issue4/I_metzger/I_metzger.html>.
20. Michaela Unterdörfer, "Gustav Metzger und die Kunst der neunziger Jahre" in Kunsthalle Nürnberg eds., *Gustav Metzger*, 15.
21. This often only paraphrased quote reads in full: "Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today" (Theodor W. Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society" (1951) in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 34; the German-language version can be found in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10.1: *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I* ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), 30).
22. Cited in Nicola Kuhn, "Unerhörter Warner in der Wüste—Abgetaucht, wieder entdeckt, mißverstanden: Die 'Young British Artists' lieben Gustav Metzger," in *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 20, 1998.
23. Bowron, "Ein Schnitt entlang der Zeit," 56.
24. *Documenta 5* catalog, Kassel 1972, 16, 56.
25. Gustav Metzger, "Kunststreik" 1977–1980 in *Gustav Metzger: Manifeste, Schriften, Konzepte* (Munich: Schreiber, 1997), 44f.
26. *Translator's Note*: "Field Marshall's Hall."
27. Dorothee Müller, "Leben im Widerstand" in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (München), March 25, 1999, 22.
28. "Ich bleibe auf der Schwelle," on the art project "Dream City" in Munich: Interview by Simone Dattenberger with Gustav Metzger in *Münchener Merkur*, March 20, 1999.
29. Kuhn, "Unerhörter Warner in der Wüste."
30. Cf. Karl Bruckmaier's preliminary report in *Der Spiegel* 54, no. 25 (June 19, 2000): 254–260.

CHAPTER 8

“The Revolution Is Over—and We Have Won!”: Alfred Hilsberg, West German Punk, and the Sixties

Jeff Hayton

Since its emergence in the 1970s, punk rock as a musical genre, fashion, ideology, and consumer product has been predicated on the rejection of the 1960s. Punk songs abandoned the psychedelic soundscapes of 1960s bands such as Pink Floyd or the earnest activism of folk artists such as Joan Baez and instead sought to return rock’n’roll to a stripped-down roots-rock sound. Fabrics like cotton or denim associated with hippies were discarded by punks who instead donned plastics, faux furs, and leather to represent, aesthetically, the artificial nature of modern life. While hippies in London or Haight-Ashbury experimented with downers such as marijuana and hashish, punks popped uppers to prepare themselves for nights of wild abandon and frenetic activity. Punks replaced 1960s’ slogans such as ‘Peace & Love’ with ‘Hate & War’ as a more realistic vision of the world. Political issues that obsessed Sixties activists, such as concern over the environment, were summarily dismissed as romantic nonsense by punks: Mick Jones, guitarist for the Clash, famously remarked, “I hate the country. The minute I see cows I feel sick.”¹ Indeed, there is perhaps no better encapsulation of punk rock’s hostility to the 1960s than the chorus to The Clash’s “1977,” the B-side to their first single *White Riot* (1977): “No Elvis, Beatles, or the Rolling Stones / in 1977.”

Contemporaries and critics since have often unquestionably accepted the claim that punk was a sweeping political, cultural, and musical rupture: indeed, public fascination and scholarly interest with the genre is often based upon punk’s revolutionary assertions and dramatic fashion.² Yet, looking more closely, one can find as much continuity as rupture. The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) impulse that underwrote punk institutions and activism harks back to grass-roots initiatives and alternative networks that flourished in the 1960s.³ Much of the imagery that punks incorporated

into their fashion, artwork, and visual style was influenced heavily by Dada, the Situationist International, and the underground press from the previous decade.⁴ Political ideals informing punk—ranging from anarchism to vegetarianism—drew historical antecedents from the antiauthoritarianism and anticapitalism elaborated in the Sixties.⁵ Many of the most influential personalities—Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, Malcolm McLaren, Caroline Coon, or Lester Bangs—were socialized in the tumultuous 1960s.⁶ In fact, even punk music can essentially be traced back to 1960s' garage rock played by bands such as the Seeds or the Stooges.⁷ And yet punk rock is considered the postmodern music style *par excellence* due to its pastiche of cut-up visuals, dissonant noise, and destructive creativity, all of which suggest that rupture rather than continuity is the defining characteristic of the genre.⁸

The link between the cultural-political practices of the 1960s and those of the punk era stand out with particular salience in West Germany, a country where both the long-1960s and the later punk era were imbued with strongly political content. Unlike its more famous cousins in the United States and the United Kingdom, punk in West Germany is relatively unknown to Anglo-American audiences; yet perhaps nowhere else is the complicated relationship between the 1960s and the 1970s more evident. Punk landed in West Germany in 1977, about six months after the more famous British case.⁹ Arriving via foreign radio stations such as Radio Luxembourg and the BBC, seen in the UK music press such as *Melody Maker* and the *New Musical Express*, and experienced by intrepid young Germans traveling to London to sample punk rock in the flesh, the genre quickly crossed the Channel and began infecting the Continent. Within a year, vibrant scenes were established in major West German urban centers such as Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Hanover, and West Berlin.

Each city-scene developed its own distinct punk sound and style. In Düsseldorf and to a lesser extent Hanover, punk was understood as an extension of radical art and individual identity exploration, while in Hamburg and West Berlin, the genre became a platform for social revolution, alternative politics, and communal lifestyles. Youths donned fantasy-inspired outfits—T-shirts and jackets filled with rips and tears, bright colors, and mismatched clothes—in their attempts to visually challenge the complacency of the everyday. Riotous concerts began taking place almost immediately as the celebrated call “here’s a chord, here’s another, here’s a third, now go form a band” inspired countless young Germans to pick up instruments and start playing. In 1978, the first West German punk recordings began appearing, and in the following year a wave of material was released on vinyl. Aiding this explosion was the establishment of independent clubs, stores, labels, and studios, which helped institutionalize the subculture while fanzines and recordings linked the growing West German scene together. By the end of the decade, a thriving national scene had emerged across the Federal Republic and was embedded in numerous local city-scenes.¹⁰

One of the key protagonists of the West German punk scene, whose labors helped set the agenda for the genre, was the journalist and promoter Alfred Hilsberg. Hilsberg believed that punk could become the basis for a new national culture, one that was modern, stylish, experimental, and based on a rejection of older German traditions in favor of innovative avenues of communication that rethought social

relations. Using his powerful editorial position at *Sounds* magazine and his nationally organized concert promotion, Hilsberg was able to direct debate about what constituted punk, the future of popular music in West Germany, and how punk and popular music could inspire a more robust German identity. Indeed, Hilsberg's efforts to forefront the genre as the future of German popular music suggests that punk—in many ways—marked the realization of Sixties' political and cultural ideology in its efforts to democratize the means of cultural production and fashion alternative identities for youths across the globe.

For Hilsberg, the DIY principle was the primary means of realizing the punk revolution. DIY as an ethos began in the 1950s, and was used to describe home improvement projects that individuals could complete independently.¹¹ A decade later, DIY was appropriated by the 1960s generation politically as part of their larger critique of contemporary consumer society and a number of initiatives such as food co-ops, drug self-help centers or alternative publications were initiated by student radicals attempting to construct a counterculture in opposition to mainstream society. The idea was that DIY projects were more fulfilling because they involved the individual in a productive experiential exploration rather than the alienation formed by purchasing a good or service produced en masse, beliefs fusing the ethos politically with larger critiques of consumer capitalism. By building or creating something oneself—so the idea went—the individual could free themselves from ideologies and structures of power, oppression, and estrangement associated with mass consumerism, and thereby retain a sense of autonomy and individuality. As such, by the mid-1970s, DIY as a concept and practice was a pillar of alternative culture, one that punks in America, the United Kingdom, and the scene developing in West Germany gravitated toward and mobilized.¹² By arguing that DIY was the future of popular music, Hilsberg worked to institutionalize a genre that would in turn become the basis for a new national music culture. In so doing, he also—crucially—demonstrated how West German punk wrestled with the consequences of the 1960s even as it was inspired by them.

***"The Revolution Is Over—and We Have Won!":
Alfred Hilsberg and the Origins of West German Punk***

Tirelessly supporting the genre in his column "neuestes deutschland" ('newest germany') in *Sounds*, through his independent record label ZickZack, and with his concert promotion, Alfred Hilsberg eagerly disseminated punk throughout the Federal Republic under the slogan "Lieber zu viel als zu wenig" ('better too much than too little'). Intrigued by reports he read about in the *New Musical Express*, Hilsberg traveled to London to gain firsthand knowledge about what was happening in the British capital in the summer of 1976.¹³ Convinced that punk was "the next big thing," Hilsberg brought UK-acts the Vibrators and the Stranglers back with him to West Germany in early 1977 for a small but influential tour.¹⁴ Soon coming into contact with young German punks, Hilsberg increasingly invested the genre with radical potential. Likening punk to prior musical revolutions, Hilsberg saw in the genre the same radical promise as the Beatles in the early 1960s. "I do not mean that punk and the Beatles are one and the same," he explained in an interview,

"Punk has different ways of expression and content, a very different background. But there were a few things that I could relate with. It came from below, what had never happened before."¹⁵ This understanding of the historic nature of punk was a critical referent for Hilsberg who placed the genre within a longer musical tradition more in-line with American punks than British punks who sought to break with all previous musical conventions.¹⁶ Nor was Hilsberg alone even if he was representative. A host of influential musicians who had been central to the Krautrock scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s—Holger Czukay, Konrad "Conny" Plank, and Klaus Schulze, for example—became deeply involved in punk as producers, sound engineers, and managers because they too saw in the genre the potential for musical revolution and sonic experimentation.

What was critical for Hilsberg was the belief that punk could return Germans to the revolutionary promise of antiauthoritarianism and grass-roots emancipation that had so marked the early years of the student movement in the 1960s.¹⁷ A slightly older radical (born in 1956) who was involved distantly in the later stages of the student movement in the early 1970s as an amateur film-maker and journalist, Hilsberg believed that a new German cultural identity could be based in the politics of difference that young punks celebrating independence, diversity, and creative experimentalism were beginning to articulate. Impressed by his contacts with early Düsseldorf punks, Hilsberg immediately seized upon the possibilities offered by the genre and saw within this stylish aesthetic and political pose an accessible form of democracy that moved well beyond what the remnants of the New Left were offering at the time.¹⁸ What made this new identity so exciting for Hilsberg was punk's emphasis on DIY activism that harked back to the prior decade. Moreover, while both conservative nationalism and Leftist populism tried to submerge the individual within larger political structures and traditions, to Hilsberg, punk and DIY was a practical carnival of individuality, a technicolor of heterogeneity that seemed to point more imaginatively toward West Germany's democratic and diverse future.

In 1978, after his first efforts at concert-promotion, Hilsberg began writing for *Sounds* magazine, then the leading German-language popular music monthly that modeled itself after the path-breaking rock journalism of Anglo-American publications such as *Rolling Stone*, *Creem*, *New Musical Express*, and *Melody Maker*.¹⁹ While originally focused on the free jazz scene, by the mid-1970s, *Sounds* had successfully become the voice of intelligent rock and pop journalism in the German-speaking world, and contributing writers such as Manfred Gillig, Jörg Gülden, and Ingeborg Schober were many of the top rock critics in West Germany.²⁰ With a 40,000 monthly distribution figure, *Sounds* covered international trends in the music industry including UK punk, about which the magazine was at first decidedly lukewarm.²¹ However, in February 1978, Hilsberg authored the first of several landmark articles on punk, "The Revolution is over—and we have won!" in which he argued that for youths, punk "is perhaps their first chance in life, like for all disillusioned youths without a degree, work, or identity. [It gives them] something to do, whether in a band, or out on the street."²² Hilsberg analyzed in detail how the genre that had once been considered outside the mainstream had now become fully incorporated into the music industry in the UK.²³ While offering much space for critical comments about whether punk had stayed true to its oppositional ideals,

Hilsberg focused on how the rise of independent labels and record stores had been instrumental in the explosion and subsequent sustainability of UK punk, a theme he was to continually emphasize and, indeed, practice.

In the following issue, Hilsberg turned to West German punk, surveying the burgeoning scenes in Düsseldorf, Hamburg, and West Berlin. In the main, Hilsberg wanted to publicize the budding scenes by indirectly contrasting them with his previous article about punk in the UK. Suggesting that German punk was lacking the kind of structural support—especially small record labels and clubs where bands could play—that was necessary for the full flowering of the genre, Hilsberg nonetheless detailed grass-roots initiatives in the major cities and how punks were slowly carving out alternative cultural spaces. Near the end of the article Hilsberg made his first major statement on the possibilities and future of punk in West Germany. Suggesting that West Germans had missed their chances in 1954 (Elvis) and 1964 (the Beatles) to develop their own indigenous popular music culture, Hilsberg believed that the moment was perhaps almost ripe to throw off what he called the "Pop-Imperialism" of Anglo-American popular music. However, the conditions for such a revolution were not exactly right and more work was necessary: "The prerequisite for the development of a socially self-conscious musical genre first needs a change in the groups' production and distribution relationships."²⁴ Of critical necessity was the growth of an independent infrastructure of small labels, record stores, and distribution ventures that could produce and then disseminate German music as he had begun to observe during his visits to the Ruhr. Crucially, punk needed to develop and evolve, to move beyond a simple imitative stance, and begin transforming the very structures of the music industry in West Germany, a kind of musical "long-march-through-the-institutions."

In 1979, Hilsberg organized three large festivals in the Hamburg Markthalle meant to showcase the diversity of German punk and function as a programmatic statement about the future of German popular music. Opened in March 1977, the Markthalle was a large venue near the central train station that could fit 1,500 people. A year prior, Hilsberg had staged there an exhibition on the history of rock'n'roll called "Pictures make the Music" that anticipated many of his ideas about rock'n'roll with its emphasis on DIY and rejection of any "nostalgic, backwards-looking glance," as one of the brochures advertising the show claimed.²⁵ However, the ZickZack festivals (or Markthalle festivals as they are also called) were conceived on an entirely more ambitious level. Convinced by his contact with Düsseldorf punks and his own observations that indigenous punk was now evolving into something new, Hilsberg wanted an event that would display German innovation and bring the various city scenes into contact, thereby transforming the local scenes throughout the Federal Republic into a national movement. Indeed, the very titles of the three shows—"Into the Future" (in English originally), "In die Zukunft" ("Into the Future"), and "Geräusche für die 80er" ("Sounds for the 1980s")—indicate that Hilsberg believed punk was the future of German popular music.

"Into the Future" was held on February 24, 1979, and featured local acts Hinterberger's Wut, the Babbits, and Kiev Stingl, Hans-A-Plast from Hanover Male, S.Y.P.H., Mittagspause, D.A.F. and Weltaufstandplan from the Ruhr, PVC and Ffurs from West Berlin, and special guests Kleenex from Zürich. An eclectic

cross section of contemporary German punk, the line up was intended to reflect the diversity of the individual city sounds then developing across the FRG. Over a thousand people packed the Markthalle, a mix of punks from the various cities who came to support their heroes, and locals curious about the new sounds.²⁶ While many were upset by Mittagspause's arrival on stage in lumberjack shirts and ship captains' hats—considered an affront to the leather-obsessed Hamburgers (as they were intended)—the general feeling was that “Into the Future” had achieved its goals of promoting the national scene and pointing the way toward future endeavors.²⁷ For Campino, singer for the Düsseldorf band ZK and later, more famously, die Toten Hosen, the first Hamburg concert was the realization of the existence of a German punk scene that was national rather than local: “For me, this first Hamburg night was the confirmation that across the country were plenty of people who thought like me. That was a great feeling to run around with such a giant bunch of punks here in Germany.”²⁸

The success of the concert convinced Hilsberg to organize a second big show—“In die Zukunft”—which took place on June 29, 1979. Again featuring diverse music—harder bands such as KFC and the Buttocks were off-set with more experimental acts such as DIN A Testbild, Materialschlacht, and Geisterfahrer—the show was a sell-out and another 500 people milled about outside who could not get tickets.²⁹ But the feeling of unity that had marked the first concert was not replicated during the second punk night. The Hamburg crowd—egged on by KFC and the Buttocks—was decidedly hostile to the more experimental acts: as Hilsberg later reported in *Sounds*, “for the more experimental bands, the pogo-audience had absolutely no patience and attacked them with beer cans and bottles.”³⁰ Some participants claimed derisively that half the audience were only “plastic (weekend) punks.”³¹ The crowd did not appreciate the jesting of 15-year-old Campino who arrived onstage dressed in lederhosen.³² Bettina Köster, on stage for the first time with DIN A Testbild, was shocked at the violence as the crowd fought with one another between sets.³³ Trini Timpop of KFC—the only band, so he claimed, to give “Vollgas” (“full throttle”) during the show—was utterly dismissive of the experimental acts: “So feeble, so intellectual, so rational” as he was to later say.³⁴ Taken aback by the divisiveness that manifested itself at the concert, Hilsberg disappointingly concluded that punk was akin to other “so-called movements (musical and otherwise): splits and sects.”³⁵

“From Grey City Walls”: Hilsberg and the Invention of the Neue Deutsche Welle

Despite the setback, Hilsberg still hoped punk was ready to take the next step toward realizing its revolutionary potential. At issue was the direction of popular music in Germany, and Hilsberg was more than convinced that what the German punk scene needed was an institutional bedrock, which would support the genre materially and musically. Using his editorial pulpit, Hilsberg published a landmark three-part series on punk in West Germany that appeared in *Sounds* near the end of 1979 entitled “Aus grauer Städte Mauern” (“From Grey City Walls”), a series coining the term *Neue Deutsche Welle*. While he has subsequently claimed that the term

NDW was forced upon him by the magazine, and scholars have rightly pointed out that others had used the term before him, Hilsberg nonetheless popularized the term and genre that would dominate the German music industry in the early 1980s even if his specific vision and use of the term was radically different from how it was subsequently deployed.³⁶ Seizing upon the efforts of groups such as Male, Mittagspause, and S.Y.P.H., who had begun singing in German and experimenting with nontraditional rock'n'roll sounds, Hilsberg argued that indigenous punk had begun evolving into a new form of specifically German popular music, the first of its kind in postwar German history. The very term *Neue Deutsche Welle* reflected the future-oriented nature of the music, as well as the national-inflection that would distinguish the genre from Anglo-American New Wave or Post-Punk. Crucially, Hilsberg argued that this new music could open up West German society in democratizing the music industry by giving youths an arena to debate the nature of German society and provide the nation with a soundtrack for new social and cultural relations freed from conservative tradition and leftist dogma.

As Hilsberg explained in the opening lines of the first article, he would not introduce the next musical "supergroup," but instead would let artists and fans describe punk themselves.³⁷ What followed was a montage of the West German punk scene in the major cities of the Federal Republic. Broaching a number of salient issues then concerning punk, Hilsberg offered a panorama of conflicting impulses and activities. The sum total, however, was a drive toward reworking existing categories of meaning along more authentic lines: "The New Wave in West Germany is no unified political / musical movement. Their regional differences, their insistence on 'old' values and search for 'new' contents and forms all work towards more productive / creative processes rather than their destruction."³⁸ Asking Michael Ruff from *Geisterfahrer* (and fellow *Sounds* reporter) about DIY pushing you to start your own band, Ruff suggested that with music, "You can influence people. They can say: I can do that also. I got a kick out of seeing the Vibrators on stage."³⁹ As Hilsberg stated rhetorically in the second article, "[S/he] who thinks up new life and societal values, must also search for new expressive styles."⁴⁰

In Hilsberg's final article appearing in the December 1979 issue of *Sounds*, he detailed the efforts of local individuals to set up small independent record labels and stores to produce and distribute German punk, people he called "Macher" ("makers," or "doers"). Hilsberg featured alternative record stores such as Burkhard Seiler's Zensor-shop in West Berlin that "attempts more through organization to create the New Wave scene," and Klaus Maeck's Rip-Off record-store in Hamburg: "In contrast to earlier in the alternative-scene, Klaus alias Max alias Ivan Rip-Off sees in Punk a new approach to self-realization. The sales returns for self-made and imported buttons are meagre as he positions his shop between consumerism and communication. But the humanistic side of business for Klaus is more important: 'Already with the mail order you come into correspondence with people, and in the shop it is much more direct.'⁴¹ The Rock On record store in Düsseldorf was helping to produce Male's first LP *Zensur & Zensur*.⁴² Franz Bielmeier's new label Rondo was producing singles under the motto "Höre-staune-gute Laune" ('Hear-amazingly-good-moods'). As Hilsberg explained, "Rondo is not some ordinary firm and doesn't dance to the old tunes but is an ambitious and personal business endeavor... Rondo

will not release any old music that is sure to land on its desktop.”⁴³ These initiatives reflected a different take on the music industry, one that Hilsberg hoped his reportage would inspire in others. The mixture of DIY activism, individuals committed to experimentalism, and the creation of alternative structures was the key—in Hilsberg’s mind—to a flourishing German punk scene.

DIY was a lifestyle choice linking the punk generation to the 1960s that rejected passive consumption in favor of active creation. The West Berlin punk groups Katapult, Auswurf, and Ätztussis were featured as model examples of DIY. Squatters living communally, the Kreuzberg bands practiced and worked together repairing leather goods: When asked whether they were living “alternatively,” Katapult responded, “Not for us, for us it is nothing else imaginable or possible. Any other form of life is no alternative.”⁴⁴ Gudrun Gut and Bettina Köster from Mania D and Malaria! ran the secondhand clothing store Eisengrau and practiced in the back.⁴⁵ Eva Gossling, saxophonist in Mania D, was likewise interested in activism: “I’m involved in order to do something other than simply consume.”⁴⁶ As Hilsberg explained, shops like Zensor “are critical because they function as communication-centers.”⁴⁷ And the pioneering work that figures such as Carmen Knoebbel at the Rättinger Hof and Martin Kippendorf at SO 36, clubs that were some of the first to support West German punk, were crucial in nurturing the alternative lifestyle.⁴⁸ And while these lives were difficult, they were nonetheless extolled as authentically grounded in independence because they eschewed the easy commercialism that was so often associated with 1970s rock’n’roll culture and harked back to the antiauthoritarian and community-based ideologies of the 1960s.

As Hilsberg explained, while the major record labels had quickly signed early punk bands and elevated them to star status in the UK, the same had not happened in the Federal Republic. In West Germany, the music industry had quickly abandoned attempts to commercialize the genre after several failed ventures early on, and it was only now at the dawn of the 1980s that the first small independent labels and record stores were beginning to produce and carry German punk.⁴⁹ The lack of interest in West German punk by the music industry, according to Hilsberg, meant that in contrast to the UK, FRG punk was more independent and not corrupted by commercialism: “The musical styles over there [UK] are already marketed at a very high level and thus isolated from the underground. Here, everything is much freer.”⁵⁰ What separated the West German music market from the British or American was the lack of power of the music industry: while in the United States or the United Kingdom, the music industry was much more expansive throughout the entertainment sector, in West Germany, the industry was less able to capitalize quickly on emergent trends meaning that German punk music could remain more independent—and thus according to Hilsberg more authentic.⁵¹ Keeping the scene smaller was a means of maintaining the credibility of punk ideals, so argued Hilsberg: “Large halls are—still—not interested in the new music and neither are they appropriate spaces for most bands to communicate directly with audiences.”⁵² The inability of earning a living through music was important because it meant that the bands could theoretically maintain total artistic freedom. Mittagspause singer Janie Jones hit the nail on the head when he exclaimed that “I cannot imagine,

doing that [playing in a band] *full time* because you have to live from it. All the fun would disappear."⁵³

On December 29, 1979, the last ZickZack festival—"Geräusche für die 80er"—was again held in the Markthalle. Again Hilsberg commissioned a mixture of experimental acts (Salinos, Minus Delta t, and Liebesgier) and hardcore rockers (Coroners, Rotzkotz, Abwärts). Again the Markthalle was packed well beyond capacity.⁵⁴ As participants remember, there was an anxious feeling of coming confrontation in the air: "I cannot remember either before or after ever experiencing somewhere where the mood was so threatening: everywhere were broken bits of glass, noise, and the way people looked. I thought to myself, all it would take is some stupid little thing to set everything off."⁵⁵ Some like Ale Sexfiend were fearful about the potential for violence: "That was the first time I ever thought: shit, everything could go upside down here. Where could you hide best if the shit hit the fan?"⁵⁶ Artist Padeluun likened the ambience to the threat of war or the end of the world.⁵⁷ Singer Mike Hentz from Minus Delta t brawled with members of the audience to protest the latter's passive consumption of punk.⁵⁸ The organizers begged the bands not to incite the crowd: Klaus Maeck remembers specifically pleading with Hentz not to provoke the crowd, telling him "We don't have the situation under control. The hall is so full, and the punks are so wild..."⁵⁹ The breaking point occurred during the set of West Berlin's Tempo. Throughout the show, hardcore fans had been upset with the experimental acts and made their displeasure well known. The Salinos were greeted with whistles and cries of "Kotz!" ("Vomit!").⁶⁰ The singer for Liebesgier had bottles thrown at her, and the saxophonist was bitten.⁶¹ Hentz and Minus Delta t—"they played a song, whose sounds can only be compared to that of sawing through a table," as one audience member has memorably described them—were welcomed with a hail of beer glasses and fists.⁶² When Tempo started to play, the audience threw potato salad and beer before storming the stage. Attacking the musicians, the angry crowd chased the band out of the Markthalle and into the Hamburg night.⁶³

DIY in Practice: "neuestes Deutschland," ZickZack, and the Institutionalization of West German Punk

Hilsberg's article series set the tone for the West German punk movement. Andreas Dorau, the Hamburg singer who would reach national fame with his hit single "Fred vom Jupiter" in 1982 at the age of 15, speaks for many when recalling that at the same time as he was discovering music, there appeared "this article series from Alfred Hilsberg in *Sounds*. That gave me courage. Everyone always said: 'Everyone can do it. Here is a record, just sing 'dum-dum-dum'—and that is great.' I thought: 'I can do that too!'"⁶⁴ Concluding his series that punk was going to revolutionize daily life in the Federal Republic, Hilsberg claimed, "It doesn't matter what explains the collapse of one band or the founding of a new one, the closing of one club or the planning for a new shop—Punk/New Wave has created a rupture in West Germany. The future of this movement will surely not lie in modest Friday-night parties but in everyday actions, in the small daily revolutions..."⁶⁵ As a new decade dawned, Hilsberg began to channel his efforts more actively into the very DIY activities that

he was extolling, the two most important being his monthly “neuestes deutschland” column in *Sounds*, and his independent record-label ZickZack.

Following “Aus grauer Städte Mauern,” *Sounds* threw its full support behind punk. In February 1980, Hilsberg’s column “neuestes deutschlands” debuted and, as Frank Schneider observes, was almost single-handedly responsible for stitching together the patchwork West German scene into a national entity.⁶⁶ Running monthly for two years, “neuestes deutschlands” was crucial in linking the diverse city scenes together because Hilsberg would publish various news and notes about the national scene—local scene reports, new recordings, concert dates, etc.—and contact information for punks to get in touch with one another. The importance of “neuestes deutschland” in providing a national forum to connect West German punk should not be understated. While historians of the genre have rightly pointed to the fanzine scene and alternative publication networks that punk called into being as innovators in the field of mass communications, support from mainstream institutions—what Arthur Marwick has called “measured judgement” from tolerant individuals in positions of power—was perhaps even more essential in institutionalizing the subculture.⁶⁷ “Neuestes deutschland” acted as a central nervous system in connecting like-minded individuals from across the country and was essential in keeping youths abreast of national developments. Further, in the album reviews section, Hilsberg alerted punks to worthwhile new recordings, especially important for youths in provincial towns because they usually needed to order these records unheard directly from mail-order enterprises. Additionally, Hilsberg wrote a number of articles on related issues—a two-part article on bootlegging, another on independent record production—celebrating the DIY aspects of punk.⁶⁸

Nor was Hilsberg isolated at *Sounds* but represented a wave of outspoken adherents for the new music. In an attempt to bolster flagging sales, the magazine had revamped its editorial line-up in July 1979, a move ushering in a number of younger writers such as Diedrich Diedrichsen, Hans Keller and Michael Ruff who were sympathetic to the new music. The album reviews section was especially important in the early years since punk records came in small pressing runs with little advertising. As such, Keller, Ruff, Hilsberg, and others wielded disproportionate influence on the listening habits of *Sounds* readers, and their punk tastes came to define certain aspects of the subculture, a dominance which often provoked outrage that even a cursory glance at the letters to the editor indicates. DIY came in for heavy praise by the *Sounds* reviewers. For Diedrichsen, it was the ZickZack festivals that introduced him to the possibilities of punk: “Enlightenment came to me first at ‘Geräusche für die 80er’. This: everyone can do it! Suddenly I experienced it as a mad effect, as if one of my friends stood on the stage. I thought: ‘Exactly! It is much better when one does it oneself than when one buys products.’”⁶⁹ The association between punk and *Sounds* was so deep that many of the writers even played in punk bands: Diedrichsen was in Nachdenkliche Wehrpflicht; Keller and Ruff were in Geisterfahrer; and Detlef Diedrichsen was in die Zimmermänner. In fact, only Hilsberg remained unaffiliated.

While Hilsberg did not play music he did make music. Hilsberg’s independent label ZickZack was founded in 1980, and within two years, had produced over 100 records for bands and solo-artists.⁷⁰ Under the slogan “better too much than too

little," Hilsberg tried to put into practice what he had championed in "Aus grauer Städte Mauern." He explicitly conceived of his label in terms of democratizing the music industry and as a means of breaking the monopoly over popular music held by the major record labels. As he later remembered, "We had started the label with no money. But it never was about releasing commercial records anyway. That played but a minor role. To me, it was about things which other people said: 'This is shit.'"⁷¹ In its first year, ZickZack released nearly 25 albums from major up-and-coming artists in the alternative scene such as Abwärts, Geisterfahrer, Wirtschaftswunder, Andreas Dorau, and Palais Schaumburg, and in 1981, this number nearly doubled. As he has remembered, that first year saw an explosion of releases that points to the hunger to both make and consume alternative music by the West German public: "In the first year there was an explosion of recordings. But at the same time, it didn't matter what was released. . . . For the first time in years, innovations were met by a young, starved and above all intellectual audience. The concerts were tremendously-well attended. The shops expanded because of the records. They [youths] wanted to have our releases at all costs."⁷² Hilsberg became famous for releasing music from anyone who asked: holding court nightly in the Marktstube in the Karolinenviertel in Hamburg, hopefuls would approach him in person or send him a cassette to which he would almost universally respond with "Ja."⁷³ By 1982, ZickZack was the largest independent record label in West Germany, and the year prior had seen sales in the range of 1.5 million DM.⁷⁴

ZickZack was only the most famous of a number of independent record labels that arose in West Germany in the late 1970s and 1980s, inspired in part by Hilsberg's call to arms. In Hanover, No Fun Records produced Hans-A-Plast who moved a more than respectable 10,000 units of their first album: by 1982, the band is estimated to have sold well over 100,000 copies of their first two independently produced and distributed LPs.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, bands such as D.A.F., Fehlfarben, and others were also selling tens of thousands of records.⁷⁶ Sometimes, individual bands (Phosphor, for example, in Hanover) created their own label (Spargel Schallplatten) to release their records, while at other times, record stores (Zensor, in West Berlin) helped local acts secure funding to pay for recording and production costs. In West Berlin, Tempo Records and Monogam began releasing a number of singles and EPs from acts such as Mania D and Tempo in 1979 and 1980.⁷⁷ In Hamburg, Konnekschen (a record store) released the *Into the Future* and *In die Zukunft* compilations (recorded live at the ZickZack festivals), along with a number of records from Hamburg hardcore groups such as the Buttocks and the Razors.⁷⁸ In Düsseldorf, Franz Bielmeier formed Rondo after inheriting money in 1979 and released albums from a number of local acts such as Aqua Velva, Male, Mittagspause, and ZK.⁷⁹ The Düsseldorf label Ata Tak, founded by members of der Plan, helped produce the first LP by Deutsch-Amerikanische Freundschaft (*Produkt der D.A.F.*) and by Pyrolator (*Inland*) in 1979, before releasing their own influential album *Geri Reig* in 1980, and hit records by Andreas Dorau, the "Fred von Jupiter" single and follow-up LP *Blumen und Narzissen* in 1981.⁸⁰ In 1980, the Maxi "Grosse Liebe" by Fehlfarben came out on their own Welt-Rekord imprint while the Düsseldorf record store Rock On helped Male cut and release their first LP *Zensur & Zensur* the year prior.⁸¹ Similarly, the record stores Rock-O-Rama (Cologne) and Schallmauer (Stuttgart)

began releasing hardcore punk LPs and singles from the Razors, KFC, and others, beginning in 1980.

These activities represented the tip of the musical iceberg, but they nonetheless point to the success of Hilsberg's DIY call that he had articulated years prior in "The Revolution is over—and we have won!" Hilsberg's slogan "better too much than too little" was intended literally: to flood the market with new German music that would inspire youths to begin making music for themselves. As he has subsequently stated, "There were simply so many incredibly interesting things. I could not just say: 'That one is important—that other is not.' I preferred to leave such judgement for the public. Because of that, every day I released another record."⁸² Regrettably, the financial viability of such ideals was not sustainable and ZickZack collapsed in 1983 amid a sea of red ink that has left Hilsberg in debt to this day. Several of ZickZack's bands were quite successful. Abwärts' first LP *Amok Koma* (1980) sold an incredible 22,000 copies—huge numbers for an independent—and LPs by the Wirtschaftswunder (*Salmobray*, 1980) and Einstürzende Neubauten (*Kollaps*, 1981), and singles by Andreas Dorau ("Der lachende Papst," 1980), Palais Schaumburg ("Telefon," 1981), and die Krupps ("Wahre Arbeit, Wahrer Lohn," 1981) all did extremely well and were even exported to the United States and Japan.⁸³ But the income generated by these sellers was immediately reinvested into new projects that generally did not; and so while ZickZack stayed true to its slogan by releasing an astonishing number of records, the label also became known for producing unlistenable music. Releasing records from many of the most extreme experimental outfits such as Minus Delta t, die Tödliche Doris, Saal 2, or Sprung aus den Wolken, albums that—commercially—were unsellable, ZickZack went bankrupt because, as Frank Z from Abwärts was to later say, the label ended up releasing vinyl after vinyl filled with nothing but "cat-meowing."⁸⁴

Conclusion

Despite the trials and tribulations of ZickZack, the DIY cultural imperative championed by Alfred Hilsberg was essential in revolutionizing popular music culture in the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1981, the *Neue Deutsche Welle* exploded and was to dominate West German national culture in the coming years, thanks in part to the hard work done by figures such as Hilsberg. Within a year, adherents of the NDW were placing chart-topping singles, selling millions of records, and even penetrating foreign markets, a first for German-language popular music. Sensing a possibility for capitalizing, mainstream record companies rushed artists into the studios and whereas 1981 saw a total of 67 NDW albums released, the number skyrocketed to 300 in 1982.⁸⁵ Bands such as Spider Murphy Gang, Trio, and Extrabreit started moving millions of albums. Solo artists Markus, Falco and Nena captured the imaginations of audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. As the punk movement began building mainstream momentum in West Germany, UK trendsetter *Melody Maker* speculated that Berlin might become the New York of the 1980s.⁸⁶

While Hilsberg quickly distanced himself from what he derisively labeled the "Neue Deutsche Naivität" (New German Naivety), which he felt was a commercial debasement of his original vision, his DIY efforts were nonetheless crucial prerequisites for

the phenomenon. By stitching together the patchwork West German local scenes into a national entity, and then promoting subcultural institutions in print and in practice, Hilsberg's DIY "vision" was essential in the success of punk "sounds." The activist DIY ethos that was elaborated politically in the Sixties was a means of taking control and restoring worth and meaning to production and consumption. With its stresses on autonomy, independence, and grass-roots mobilization, DIY connected West German punk with an earlier era. In this sense, punk represented a culmination of 1960s-style political ideology and direct activism rather than an opposition, of which Hilsberg was a crucial mediator. Speaking about her former label chief recently, Abwärts bassist Margita Haberland said of Hilsberg, "He was a dreamer. He was totally engaged. He really gave his heart's blood."⁸⁷ And while ZickZack collapsed and *Sounds* quickly followed suit, the dream Hilsberg helped launch survived, flourished, and has become the basis for the independent music scene in Germany to this day.

Notes

1. Marcus Gray, *Last Gang in Town: The Story and Myth of the Clash* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1996), 174.
2. Even the titles of books on punk celebrate the rupturousness of the genre. See Curry Malott and Milagros Peña, *Punk Rockers' Revolution: A Pedagogy of Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); Adrian Boot and Chris Salewicz, *Punk: The Illustrated History of a Music Revolution* (New York: Penguin Studio, 1997); Tricia Henry, *Break All Rules! Punk Rock and the Making of a Style* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989).
3. According to George McKay, "One of the things hippy and punk had in common—at least in terms of my constructions of them—was an oppositional impulse, an idealism or rhetoric of idealism. For both, politics and culture were, or could be, or should be, the same thing." See George McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties* (London and New York: Verso, 1996), 5.
4. Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
5. Craig O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk: More than Noise!* 2nd ed. (London: AK Press, 1999).
6. Clinton Heylin argues that rock journalists such as Bangs invented punk *avant-la-lettre* in their call for a "new" rock n' roll in the late 1960s and early 1970s. See Clinton Heylin, *Babylon's Burning: From Punk to Grunge* (London: Viking, 2007), 2–8.
7. See Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* (Milton Keynes, PA: Open University Press, 1985), 59–63.
8. The classic statement—though he does not use the term postmodernism—is Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 1979).
9. There is an enormous literature on UK punk. But for excellent introductions, see Heylin, *Babylon's Burning*; John Robb, *Punk Rock: An Oral History* (London: Ebury Press, 2006); and Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock and Beyond*, rev. ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002).
10. For an overview of the West German punk, see Hollow Skai, *Alles nur geträumt: Fluch und Segen der Neuen Deutschen Welle* (Innsbruck: Hannibal, 2009); and Jürgen Teipel, *Verschwende Deine Jugend: Ein Doku-Roman über den deutschen Punk und New Wave* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).

11. While there are countless how-to guides, there are no comprehensive histories of the DIY movement. On punk DIY, see Teal Triggs, *Fanzines: The DIY Revolution* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2010); Alan O'Connor, *Punk Record Labels and the Struggle for Autonomy: The Emergence of DIY* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008); Amy Spencer, *DIY: The Rise of Lo-Fi Culture* (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 2005); and George McKay, ed. *DiY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain* (London and New York: Verso, 1998).
12. On alternative culture in West Germany, see Sven Reichardt and Detlef Siegfried, eds., *Das Alternative Milieu. Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa 1968–1983* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010).
13. Günter Franzen and Boris Penth, *Last Exit. Punk: Leben im toten Herz der Städte* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1982), 210; and Jürgen Stark und Michael Kurzawa, *Der große Schwindel? Punk—New Wave—neue Welle* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Freie Gesellschaft, 1981), 193.
14. Several influential West German bands—such as PVC—formed immediately after seeing the Vibrators. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 28.
15. Franzen and Penth, *Last Exit*, 210.
16. Clinton Heylin argues that this is one of the key differences between American and British punk. Clinton Heylin, *From the Velvets to the Voidoids: The Birth of American Punk Rock*, updated ed. (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2005).
17. For a brief overview, see Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003).
18. In West Germany, the student movement had splintered into numerous Maoist- and Communist-inspired factions, which—by the mid-1970s—had little relevance to anyone but themselves in their constant internecine feuding. See Gerd Koenen, *Das rote Jahrzehnt: Unsere kleine deutsche Kulturrevolution, 1967–1977* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2001); and Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1993).
19. On the emergence of serious rock journalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Ulf Lindberg et al., *Rock Criticism from the Beginning: Amusers, Bruisers, and Cool-Headed Cruisers* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).
20. See Tim Klütz, “POP TALK—Wie Pop in Sounds und SPEX zur Sprach kam,” in *Pop am Rhein*, ed. Uwe Husslein (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008), 161–189.
21. See Steve Strange, “Die Rückkehr der Rotznase,” *Sounds*, No. 1 (January 1977): 34–37; Manfred Gillig, “Viel Stunk um Punk,” *Sounds*, No. 2 (February 1977): 12; “What Ever Punks You On,” *Sounds*, No. 3 (March 1977): 10; and Mike Flood, “London brennt,” *Sounds*, No. 7 (July 1977), 32–35.
22. Alfred Hilsberg, “Die Revolution ist vorbei—wir haben gesiegt!” *Sounds*, No. 2 (February 1978): 33–34.
23. Hilsberg, “Die Revolution ist vorbei,” 33–34.
24. Alfred Hilsberg, “Rodenkirchen Is Burning—Krautpunk,” *Sounds*, No. 3 (March 1978): 24.
25. *Rock Musik* no. 2 (Hamburg 1979): 3. See “Cover of Rock’n’Roll,” *Sounds*, No. 4 (April 1978): 6.
26. *Heimatblatt* no. 3 (Düsseldorf 1979): 3–5; *Preiserhöhung* no. 2 (Hamburg 1979): 11–13; *Pretty Vacant* no. 5 (Hamburg 1979): 16–17; and *Rock Musik* no. 2 (Hamburg 1979): 7–10.
27. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 136. See the positive reviews in *Rock Musik* no. 2 (Hamburg 1979): 7–10.

28. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 137.
29. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 163.
30. Alfred Hilsberg, "Punk bis zum Untergang," *Sounds*, No. 8 (August 1979): 6.
31. *Heimatblatt* no. 6 (Düsseldorf 1979): 2.
32. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 164–165.
33. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 164.
34. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 165.
35. Hilsberg, "Punk bis zum Untergang," 6.
36. Skai, *Alles nur geträumt*, 9; and Teipel, *Verschwende*, 141. Thomas Groetz correctly points out that Jürgen Kramer used the term 'Neue Welle' for the third edition of his fanzine *Einige Millionen* in August 1978. See Thomas Groetz, *Kunst=Musik: Punk und New Wave in der Nachbarschaft von Joseph Beuys* (Berlin: Martin Schmitz Verlag, 2002), 24. See also Frank A. Schneider, *Als die Welt noch unterging: Von Punk zu NDW* (Mainz: Ventil Verlag, 2007), 12; and Barbara Hornberger, *Geschichte wird gemacht. Die Neue Deutsche Welle. Eine Epoche deutscher Popmusik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011).
37. Alfred Hilsberg, "Aus grauer Städte Mauern. Neue Deutsche Welle," *Sounds*, No. 10 (October 1979): 20.
38. Alfred Hilsberg, "Aus grauer Städte Mauern (Teil 2). Dicke Titten und Avantgarde," *Sounds*, No. 11 (November 1979): 24.
39. Hilsberg, "Dicke Titten und Avantgarde," 25.
40. Hilsberg, "Dicke Titten und Avantgarde," 22.
41. Alfred Hilsberg, "Aus grauer Städte Mauern (Teil 3). Macher? Macht? Moneten?" *Sounds*, Nr.12 (December 1979), 45, 47.
42. Hilsberg, "Macher? Macht? Moneten?" 46.
43. Hilsberg, "Macher? Macht? Moneten?" 46.
44. Hilsberg, "Neue Deutsche Welle," 24.
45. Hilsberg, "Neue Deutsche Welle," 24.
46. Hilsberg, "Dicke Titten und Avantgarde," 27.
47. Hilsberg, "Macher? Macht? Moneten?" 46.
48. Hilsberg, "Macher? Macht? Moneten?" 45, 46–47.
49. Hilsberg, "Macher? Macht? Moneten?" 45.
50. Franzen and Penth, *Last Exit*, 207.
51. Franzen and Penth, *Last Exit*, 215, 218.
52. Hilsberg, "Macher? Macht? Moneten?" 46.
53. Italics in original. Hilsberg, "Neue Deutsche Welle," 24.
54. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 210; Michele Avantario, "1977–1987: Von Krawall bis Totenschiff. Punk, New Wave und Hardcore," in *Läden, Schuppen, Kaschemmen: Eine Hamburger Popkulturgeschichte*, ed., Christoph Twickel (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 2003), 53–54.
55. Roberto Ohrt, "Punkmemory," in *Zurück zum Beton: Die Anfänge von Punk und New Wave in Deutschland 1977–'82*, eds., Ulrike Groos, Peter Groschlüter, and Jürgen Teipel (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2002), 154.
56. Avantario, "1977–1987: Von Krawall bis Totenschiff," 53.
57. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 214.
58. Groetz, *Kunst=Musik*, 168.
59. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 211.
60. *Ants*, Nr.3 (Augsburg: 1980): 4.
61. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 213.
62. *Ants*, Nr.3 (Augsburg: 1980): 6.

63. Skai, *Alles nur geträumt*, 80; and Stark and Kurzawa, *Der große Schwindel?* 96–97, 176.
64. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 203.
65. Hilsberg, “Macher? Macht? Moneten?” 48.
66. Schneider, *Als die Welt noch unterging*, 112.
67. Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958–c. 1974* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
68. Alfred Hilsberg, “Bootlegging: Kleine Löcker im System,” *Sounds*, Nr.7 (July 1979), 28–33; Alfred Hilsberg, “Bootlegging: Kleine Löcker im System Teil 2,” *Sounds*, Nr.8 (August 1979), 28–31; and Alfred Hilsberg, “Vom unabhängigen Schallplattenproduzieren . . . und was der Plan dazu sagt,” *Sounds*, Nr.7 (July 1980), 32–35.
69. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 210.
70. Skai, *Alles nur geträumt*, 90.
71. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 269–270.
72. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 270.
73. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 270.
74. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 301; and Hornberger, *Geschichte wird gemacht*, 332, n.14.
75. Skai, *Alles nur geträumt*, 113.
76. Schneider, *Als die Welt noch unterging*, 84, 190.
77. “Tempo,” in *Das NDW-Lexicon: Die Neue Deutsche Welle—Bands und Solisten von A bis Z*, ed. Christian Graf (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2003), 249.
78. “Geräusche für die 80er Jahre,” *Sounds*, Nr.12 (December 1979), 13; “neuestes deutschland,” *Sounds*, Nr.4 (April 1980), 14; and Alfred Hilsberg and Diedrich Diedrichsen, “Review—In die Zukunft, Geräusche für die 80er, and No Fun Sampler,” *Sounds*, Nr.5 (May 1980), 78–79.
79. *Heimatblatt*, Nr.7 (Düsseldorf: 1979): 10.
80. “Ata Tak Records” in *Das NDW-Lexicon*, 18.
81. Hilsberg, “Macher? Macht? Moneten?” 46; and “Das Male-Interview,” in *Rock Session 4. Magazin der populären Musik*, eds., Klaus Humann and Carl-Ludwig Reichert (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980), 193–194.
82. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 270–271.
83. Thomas Buttler, “Die Krupps. Schöne Grüße an Bernward,” *Sounds*, Nr.1 (January 1982), 13; Kid, “Die Wahrheit über Hamburg!” *Sounds*, Nr.5 (May 1982), 26–27; Koch, *Angriff auf's Schlaraffenland*, 136; and Hornberger, *Geschichte wird gemacht*, 114 and 324.
84. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 302.
85. Skai, *Alles nur geträumt*, 190.
86. Rudolf O. Wagner, “Berlin. Neues aus der Frontstadt,” *Sounds*, Nr.7 (1980), 8.
87. Teipel, *Verschwende*, 302.

CHAPTER 9

The Sun and Moon Have Come Together: The Fourth Way, the Counterculture, and Capitol Records

Kevin Fellezs

Formed in 1968, musical group The Fourth Way was among the first bands to merge rock, jazz, and non-Western musical approaches in a way that mirrored the mixed-race membership of the band—white New Zealander pianist Mike Nock, black American violinist Michael White, white American bassist Ron McClure, and black American drummer Eddie Marshall—a notable feature at the time. The band's eponymous debut and their second release, a live recording titled *The Sun and Moon Have Come Together*, were recorded in the fall of 1969. Their final recording, *Werwolf*, was a live recording of their appearance in the 1970 Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland. However, with the exception of a small number of dates clustered around the band's appearance in Montreux, The Fourth Way rarely performed outside of the San Francisco Bay Area, limiting their exposure.

My focus in this chapter is to think through the ways in which The Fourth Way, a relatively unknown band working in the same geographic area and within the same countercultural milieu as more famous bands associated with the hippie subculture such as the Grateful Dead, enacted these countercultural ideals even more forcefully than their more visible peers. I am interested especially with the ways in which the band dealt with inclusive notions of belonging and an interest in heterodox spiritual practices that were articulated through their genre mixtures that would bear fruit in the following decades in musical styles that would come to be known as fusion (jazz-rock/funk), world music, and new age.

As Theodore Roszak admits in his introduction to the 1995 edition of his seminal work on the 1960s' counterculture, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, initially published in 1968 as the events he described were unfolding, popular music played a vital role in its creation: "If there is one aspect of the period that I now wish had enjoyed more attention in these pages, it is the music. Music inspired and carried

the best insights of the counter culture—from folk protest ballads and songs of social significance at the outset to the acid rock that became the only way to reflect the surrealist turn that America was to take at the climax of the Vietnam War.”¹ Roszak’s point about music is well taken. Music, particularly certain genres of popular music, played a significant role in the formation and expression of countercultural values and the musicians willingly played the part of heading the vanguard of a coming youth revolution. This was true of the San Francisco psychedelic rock scene from which a number of leading rock bands emerged, including the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane, Santana, Janis Joplin with Big Brother and the Holding Company, Country Joe and the Fish, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and Moby Grape. The Fourth Way, a jazz band interested in many of the same spiritual and political beliefs that motivated their rock contemporaries, is missing from this well-known history, as Roszak’s highlighting of folk song and acid rock attest.

By linking their interest in non-Western spirituality to an aesthetic merging jazz and rock while pursuing a commercial music career, The Fourth Way exemplified the types of contradictory impulses that motivated musicians aligned with the counterculture of the late 1960s between progressive idealism and pragmatic concerns.

The Sun and Moon Have Come Together

This little-known band embodied the contradictions and tensions of the countercultural moment in two interrelated ways. First, their attempts to adhere to a modest spiritual program stood in marked contrast to their hopes for achieving financial success or at least economic stability as professional musicians. While not necessarily incompatible goals, in the San Francisco counterculture of 1968, for musicians to entertain any commercial interest was thought to irreparably tarnish loftier artistic and spiritual ideals. Second, at the time, jazz critics saw young jazz musicians’ merging of jazz and rock as a threat to efforts to establish jazz as an art music because of their view of rock as a benighted genre. Rock’s rise in this period in terms of both cultural and material capital within the broader culture further fueled jazz critics’ animus. And flowing beneath this discourse was a strong undercurrent concerned with racialized difference.

Historically, professional jazz musicians have often performed repertoire chosen primarily because of assumed audience expectations rather than personal taste or preference. Yet, while “Jelly Roll” Morton boasted about his familiarity with the European concert tradition in order to display the breadth of his musical knowledge, young jazz musicians in the late 1960s and 1970s were eagerly expressing their appreciation for rock, a genre that had replaced jazz as the center of popular music culture and, despite some rock musicians’ increasingly sophisticated efforts, remained a decidedly “low brow” genre in comparison to jazz. However, by the mid-1960s, as Bernard Gendron convincingly argues in *From Montmartre to the Mudd Club*, rock, rather than jazz, was steadily displacing the musical tastes of the literati and artistic avant-garde world. Jazz apologists continued to claim the high cultural road, insisting that in terms of musical competence and standards of excellence, jazz required a finer set of theoretical and technical “chops,” or skills, than rock.

As rock’n’roll was transformed into rock in the mid-1960s, rock musicians such as Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Keith Moon, and Steve Winwood as well as the members of bands such as the Beatles, Pink Floyd, or Yes began claiming the

title of virtuoso even as they operated within a supposedly facile commercial style of teen-oriented pop music. Moreover, despite Chuck Berry and Jimi Hendrix's looming presences and the genre's roots in black American rhythm-and-blues, rock's racialization as a white musical idiom went hand in hand with broader changes in the aesthetic and cultural divisions of the period, including rock's increasing importance in broad cultural terms, as the expression "rock opera" indicates. However, while many rock musicians held pretenses to high art legitimization, there is yet, to be sure, a Lincoln Center Institute of Rock or Funk. Indeed, that such an institution seems ludicrous indicates the continuing discrepancy between the positions jazz and rock or funk occupy within the broader culture.

Segregating black musical traditions and musicians into subordinate markets by labeling them "rhythm-and-blues" or "jazz"—or, even earlier, "race records"—did not simply foreclose institutional legitimacy, it effectively barred those traditions and musicians from the more lucrative mainstream "rock" or "pop" markets, as well. Subordinate markets are defined by their smaller distribution networks, lessened promotional support, if any, and smaller-sized benefits of any kind, including financial ones, for performers and composers. Maureen Mahon's insightful *Right to Rock* is centrally concerned with the economic and artistic price levied on black rock musicians caught within this history, and cogently ascribes rock's dominance as a cultural form as partially rooted in its "invisible" racialization as a music genre with assumed white musicians and listeners.² Fusion musicians highlighted the fact that the question was whether your music was considered part of a "tradition" or a "market" and not, as critical and fan discourse would have it, whether it was considered, at bottom, a "jazz" or a "rock" effort.

Still, by 1968, while jazz was considered "black music" in origin and in its fundamental aesthetic thrust by both black and white jazz critics, each group understood this in two distinct ways. For many white critics, the argument that jazz should be appreciated as an art music carried the implication that jazz had evolved into a deracinated and universally accessible idiom. In other words, nonblack jazz musicians could compose and perform jazz as authentically as black jazz musicians. Importantly, much of their arguments rested on the idea that jazz had risen to art status because of the adoption of formal European art music aesthetics, methodologies, and practices. It must be noted, however, that there were many white jazz critics who bemoaned the rise of jazz as art, insisting that the loss of a vital connection to popular music and vernacular culture was detrimental to the music's vigor. Black jazz critics and musicians argued that any acknowledgment regarding the art status of jazz from "legitimate" culture should be based on a historical understanding of black aesthetics without recourse to European aesthetic standards.³ Black critics held disparate views on the question of whether or not nonblack jazz musicians were capable of innovating, rather than merely mimicking or, worse, appropriating "real jazz." Overall, however, the argument for jazz's artistic legitimacy was used by both black and white critics to lobby for more equitable economic relations between black musicians and predominantly white record label owners.⁴

Rock, on the other hand, was seen by jazz critics, both black and white, as a thoroughly commercial genre produced, performed, and consumed by white youth. The fact that the literati and intelligentsia outside of jazz had turned to rock as a legitimate cultural form—especially after the release of the Beatles's full-length concept album,

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band in 1967—only seemed to harden the position of jazz critics and musicians toward rock.⁵ For their part, the rock press paid little attention to the debates in jazz or the kinds of activities in which The Fourth Way were involved.⁶

The racialization of these two musical genres was complicated further as mainstream jazz became increasingly aligned with white middle-class audiences in direct contrast to the various strains of black nationalism voiced by avant-garde or “free jazz” artists in the late 1960s, many of whom were motivated by a desire for greater authority within jazz discourse and institutions.⁷ Similarly, by the time of the Beatles’s invasion of America in 1964, rock had been effectively stripped of its black American roots in rhythm-and-blues and the electric blues of musicians such as Muddy Waters. This was reflected in the nominative change from “rock’n’roll” to “rock” by writers and fans of the late 1960s, particularly as the Beatles and other rock groups began borrowing techniques from experimental art music as well as non-Western musical traditions. Part of these musicians’ inclusive even eclectic aesthetic agendas was premised on challenging normative cultural hierarchies and, by implication, the assumptions linking particular racialized bodies with specific genres.

Yet, as Nadya Zimmerman details, despite the hippies’ stated ideals regarding equality of all kinds, “Organized protests for civil rights and racial integration were rarely staged in the Haight-Ashbury district. With the notable exception of African American activist-comedian Dick Gregory, the speakers and performers at the Human Be-In were white.”⁸ The Diggers, a hippie collective, invoked the Black Panthers but kept their distance, viewing the Panthers more as romantic role models than as compatriots in a political battle for social justice. Zimmerman also notes, “It appears that the counterculture’s indirect negotiation of racial politics made it possible for a white, often racist, outlaw group [the motorcycle gang, the Hell’s Angels] to be a real presence on the streets, a black hyperracial outlaw group [the Black Panthers] to be lauded in imagery, and somewhere in between, a seemingly peace-loving, nonracist, non-participatory counterculture to thrive.”⁹

On November 10, 1968, Grace Slick appeared on *the Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in blackface, ending the Airplane’s performance with a raised fist salute. Slick contended at the time that “there weren’t any Negroes on the show and I thought the quota needed adjustment,” explicitly acknowledging the resonance the legacy of blackface minstrelsy continued to carry in mid-twentieth-century America. Trying to gain some distance from that history, Slick attempted to pass it off as a cosmetic choice.¹⁰ As an emerging icon of the San Francisco hippie counterculture, Slick’s dismissive disregard for the racial, even racist, component to her actions appears defensive and disingenuous. But as noted above, the countercultural scene in the Haight-Ashbury was uncomfortable with the Black Power politics that was emerging just down the street in the Fillmore and across the Bay Bridge in Oakland. The easy adoption of blackness, though, as a gesture of an assumed solidarity undergirded a public rhetoric of universal “peace, love, and happiness,” as a widely used phrase at the time indicated.

Moreover, the appropriation of non-Western, nonwhite cultural forms came with a disavowal of the “parent culture,” which dictated conformity to bourgeois norms. The appropriations didn’t stop with blackness. Richard Goldstein, reporting in the *Village Voice*, skeptically cast the San Francisco counterculture as besotted with “pop mysticism.”¹¹ Coupled to the exploration of non-Western spirituality was the use of instruments from, in particular, India. The sitar, popularized by Beatle George

Harrison, as well as other instruments from South Asia such as the tabla drums not only evoked an exotic aura for musicians and listeners alike but also reshaped approaches to the pop song. Similar to the role of the tamboura's drone, which anchors a raga performance, pedal points or modal approaches to rock songs became more prevalent. Groups such as the Butterfield Blues Band recorded albums such as *East-West* (Elektra, 1966) in which the title track, inspired by LSD, was based, as pianist Mark Naftalin explained, "on a drone [like Indian music]." Rock critic Dave Marsh admiringly appraised the effort, stating, "With *East-West*, above any other extended piece of the mid-Sixties, a rock band finally achieved a version of the musical freedom that free jazz had found a few years earlier."¹² Again, the seemingly effortless use of non-Western, non-rock music played into countercultural ideas regarding the complicated weave of exoticist appropriation, sincere searches for meaning outside of the consumerist culture driven by corporate interests, and a quietist political stance.

There were, in fact, vital links between the San Francisco Bay Area counterculture and various Asian spiritual practices and belief systems. A 1967 concert, for example, featuring local San Francisco-based bands the Grateful Dead, Moby Grape, and Big Brother and the Holding Company as musical acts supporting the poet Allen Ginsberg and Swami Bhaktivedanta was titled "Krishna Consciousness Comes West." This was not an isolated event. Indeed, the prototype for the rock festival, 1967's Monterey Pop Festival, held at a location a little over a hundred miles south of San Francisco, not only provided a prototype for subsequent mass audience rock festivals such as Woodstock (as well as the arena rock tour), but is also notable for having every musical act agree to perform for free so that all revenues could be donated to charities.¹³

Studies such as Robert Ellwood's *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening* challenge the assumption that the entire decade was a deeply secularist time in North America, overly impressed by politicized students and social activists who were antagonistic to spiritual and/or religious inclinations. Ellwood argues persuasively that an important corollary to the political protests of the late 1960s was a social milieu in which traditional as well as "new" religious expression was partly constitutive. In particular, the interest in non-Christian spirituality not only indicated fissures within the counterculture but also mirrored the tensions and contradictions of predominantly secularist political activities undertaken in an increasingly spiritual moment within countercultural circles in the San Francisco Bay Area.¹⁴

Music historian Zimmerman notes, "The exotically tinged flavor of the Haight exemplified [...] everything that a Judeo-Christian-based technocracy was not. From 'ancient' astrology charts to Indian textiles, hash pipes to Celtic jewelry, Native American attire to Kamasutra-inspired sex [...] Everyday activities, such as drug-taking, listening to music, dancing, and sex, were transformed into 'mystical' quests, secular experiences into sacred adventures. This druggy, exotic sacralization of the secular was integral to the development of the San Francisco counterculture from its early days following the summer at the Red Dog Saloon in 1965."¹⁵ Additionally, the Beatles's *Sgt. Pepper's* included George Harrison's Indian music- and mysticism-influenced "Within You Without You," indicating the mainstreaming of non-Western musical and spiritual practices in the popular music culture of 1968. The Fourth Way, a relatively unknown band, provided another musical sounding out of those same interests, indicating that conventional ideas about jazz and rock, cultural and musical hierarchies, and the relationship between pop music,

and by extension popular culture, and spiritual practices and ideologies were undergoing radical transformations.

Blues My Mind

Boasting a legacy of nonconformity exemplified by homegrown eccentrics such as the self-proclaimed Imperial Majesty Emperor Norton I (*né* Joshua Abraham Norton) in the nineteenth century to the bohemian culture of the Beats in the mid-twentieth century, San Francisco beckoned to the young people who flocked to the city's Haight-Ashbury district in the mid-1960s. A strong component of the hippie counterculture was a rhetorical openness to all the arts with a strong ecumenical and nonhierarchical vision that could enfold macramé alongside fine art sculpture, which sprang from a vision of egalitarianism and social norms that privileged collectivism rather than individualism.

While the hippies were largely apolitical and saw transcendence rather than engagement as a productive political methodology to enact a progressive transformation of society, activist Leftist politics was moving in another direction. Still, hippies staged protests, including stopping traffic on Haight Street to protest the tourist buses that began including a visit to "Hippie Town," and clashing with police throughout 1967. By 1968, many of the original Haight-Ashbury hippies had moved to communes throughout Northern California, the Northwest and Hawai'i, largely abandoning San Francisco.¹⁶

But the impact of the flower children's ideas about the ways in which inner, personal transformation, especially through spiritual practices of various kinds, would recalibrate mainstream politics and social convention toward progressive ends resonated beyond the Golden Gate to the rest of the world. For example, while each of the individual band members came to the band from professional jazz backgrounds, The Fourth Way's popularity would be drawn primarily from young rock audiences, which enjoyed eclectic tastes in music, thanks, in part, to the so-called free-form or progressive FM radio DJs.¹⁷ The "mixed genre" lineups common to rock concerts at the time reflected this relative openness to genre mixing and eclectic music programming that cohered nicely with the inclusive ideology of the hippie counterculture. Nock remembers, "You were liable to hear bands like Cream with the [jazz vibraphonist] Gary Burton Quartet, [jazz bandleader] Sun Ra and the Grateful Dead, or The Fourth Way. There was a promoter back then called Bill Graham and he was wonderful. It was a terrifically open period."¹⁸

The Fourth Way performed in both jazz and rock venues though the majority of the band's gigs were at rock events or opening for rock acts. In fact, the band members envisioned their efforts as jazz musicians with an appreciation for rock music. However, the band did not have a vocalist, a condition that usually makes it more difficult for a band to achieve mainstream success. While Capitol Records may have been interested in exploiting interest in psychedelic bands from San Francisco in 1968—the home of the highly successful Jefferson Airplane, Santana, and the Grateful Dead, as well as critically acclaimed rock groups such as Hot Tuna, Moby Grape, and Quicksilver Messenger Service—the record label was taking some risk in signing an all-instrumental band.

But what about the glaring contradiction between stated ideals about spiritual growth, the rejection of mainstream consumerist culture, and the pursuit of major label record deals and mass audience appeal? In 1968, a telling sign appeared that Mammon was indeed encroaching on the ideals of this burgeoning youth culture. The Jefferson Airplane, one of San Francisco's most successful acid rock bands with a long history of involvement with the local hippie scene, were briefly cast as apostates when they recorded a number of radio commercials for Levi's, the denim jeans company. They weren't alone. British psychedelic band, Cream, which featured guitarist Eric Clapton, bassist Jack Bruce, and drummer Ginger Baker, recorded an advertisement for Falstaff Beer, sounding eerily like their hit, "Sunshine of Your Love."¹⁹ It is no secret that the Jefferson Airplane was one of the first psychedelic bands signed to a lucrative deal with major label RCA, initiating a flood of major labels scouring the Haight in a search for other acid rock bands and motivating Capitol's signing of The Fourth Way. But it is an indication of the strange bed-fellows hippie bands and corporate executives made when on the Airplane's 1969 recording, *Volunteers*, vocalist Grace Slick sang pointedly to capitalist interests, "Up against the wall, motherfuckers!" in the song, "We Can Be Together." Yet the contradiction between the stated ideals of the hippie counterculture and a leading acid rock band's calculatedly economic decision to remain aligned with a major record label signaled the depth of the internal contradictions caught within the nexus of the counterculture and consumerism operating in the hippie subculture.²⁰

Abbie Hoffman, writing in a letter to the *Village Voice*, saw right through the hippies' contradictions: "It summarized for me all the doubts I have about the hippie philosophy. I realize they are just doing their 'thing' but while Jefferson Airplane grooves with its thing, over one hundred workers in the Levi Strauss plant on the Tennessee-Georgia border are doing their thing, which consists of being on strike to protest deplorable working conditions."²¹ To be fair, once Jefferson Airplane learned of the strike, they opted out of their contract and never produced another commercial again.

The Fourth Way did not enjoy the benefits of hit singles, however. How can a jazz band "sell out" if they are barely selling? On the one hand, as Nock points out, the appeal at the time for creating this electric jazz-rock-soul music blend was both individual expression and communal embrace: "I've always seen myself as a populist. Not to the extent of selling out the music, but I am very interested in sharing the music with a range of people. I think a lot of musicians, especially jazz musicians, don't even consider that. Many just want to play their music without any consideration that there might be an audience listening. To me, the audience is very much a part of it. Sure, I have my standards and what I want to get across, but there's a balance. There's nothing wrong with being populist and many great jazz players have been populists: Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis. Miles didn't do all that stuff for himself; he did it with an eye to the fact that he had an audience."²²

On the other hand, there were more material concerns at play. Nock admits, "The decision to go electric was purely a pragmatic one. There were no gigs—jazz was dead—but the rock and roll clubs were springing up in the [San Francisco] Bay Area and they were hosting all kinds of music: folk, pop, rock, and even some jazz from time to time. These rooms didn't have pianos, and so you had to take your own piano. Fortunately the [Fender] Rhodes [electric piano] was being developed at the

time.”²³ The opportunity afforded by audiences who were more open-minded and eclectic in their tastes or by club policies dictated by market realities—it is difficult for *any* venue to stay open solely as a folk or jazz club—allowed The Fourth Way to develop a loyal audience. It was their misfortune that they weren’t able to explore the possibilities beyond the San Francisco Bay Area for the most part and for the failure by Capitol to promote them aggressively beyond their local fan base.

The Fourth Way

Mike Nock, cofounder of The Fourth Way, arrived in San Francisco by way of a long stint in New York City. Like many jazz aspirants from outside of the United States at the time, Nock arrived in the United States by way of a scholarship from the Berklee School of Music in Boston. Rather than devoting itself to the Western concert music tradition, Berklee was one of the first music conservatories dedicated to jazz and other popular music styles. Though Nock left Berklee after a year, he had formed connections that would prove consequential. Through Margaret Chaloff, a renowned piano teacher, whose students included Red Garland, Keith Jarrett, and Steve Kuhn, Nock was introduced to a small group of avant-garde jazz musicians who were interested in experimental music including saxophonist Sam Rivers and drummer Tony Williams.

Their discussions and sessions with the Boston Improvisational Ensemble, a “new music” avant-garde art music group, familiarized Nock with many of the current experimental concepts being shaped in and out of jazz at the time and would influence the direction of his playing. While he padded out his resume with straight-ahead jazz gigs, Nock maintained that the exploratory sessions with Rivers and Williams “really influenced me... Conceptually, it was definitely way ahead of most of the music I came across later... when I played with other people I was pretty blasé about it; they were gigs, it was fun to play, but it wasn’t the same thing as what I had been experiencing playing with [Rivers and Williams], where it was: ‘Get into it! Explore!’”²⁴

Eventually, Nock would work in a variety of bands, including under the leadership of multi-instrumentalist Yusef Lateef, the Count’s Rock Band (another early fusion band led by saxophonist Steve Marcus), and the musician who would introduce him to his fellow bandmates in The Fourth Way, tenor saxophonist John Handy. Handy had been a member of bassist Charles Mingus’s band in the late 1950s but moved to San Francisco on his departure from Mingus’s group. Handy’s own group achieved visibility when his debut recording for the Columbia record label of the band’s live performance at the Monterey Jazz Festival in 1965 garnered two Grammy nominations for the two songs that comprise the entirety of the album. Handy’s group featured a young violinist named Michael White, who was incorporating elements of the “new thing” (free jazz) into his playing and had achieved a highly individualized sound. When Handy received the opportunity to perform at the Nice jazz festival in France in 1967, he needed a pianist and offered Nock the piano chair.

In April 1968, the Handy quintet recorded in New York at a Columbia Records recording studio nicknamed The Church due to the building’s origin as a Presbyterian church. Located in the Lower East Side of New York City, members of the mixed-race ensemble would encounter various problems from the mundane—the failure to get cab rides until the white band members hailed a cab on their own with the rest

of the group quickly running into the cab before the cab driver could protest—to the dangerous—Nock had been robbed so often that it was one of the reasons he had finally decided to leave New York for the West Coast. When he was offered a permanent position in Handy's band after the saxophonist was impressed with his performance in Nice, Nock did not hesitate to be nearer his new bandleader.

Importantly, Handy's group had crossed over from an exclusively jazz audience, which, by the late 1960s, tended to be middle-aged, to a younger crowd that favored rock, performing at the Avalon Ballroom and the Fillmore Auditorium as supporting acts for rock groups such as the Grateful Dead, exposing them to the larger rock audiences who would become an important core of The Fourth Way's audience and foreshadowing the moves the band would initiate as one of the first jazz-rock fusion groups. White had quit the Handy group prior to Nock's involvement but was persuaded to rejoin when Nock "talked John [Handy] and Michael into playing back together again because [Nock] also had the idea of getting a separate band with Michael, which of course became The Fourth Way."²⁵ Delighted to be working with Nock again, White soon joined the pianist in informal duets at Nock's home when not rehearsing or performing with Handy's quintet.

Born in Houston, Texas, but raised primarily in Oakland, California, Michael White picked up the violin when he was nine years old. White had performed with a number of jazz artists, including pianist McCoy Tyner and alto saxophonist Eric Dolphy, among others, but became known through his association with Handy, particularly because of his work on the Monterey Jazz Festival recording. Prior to this, White had spent time studying music at Columbia University and, later, performing for two years in Sun Ra's Arkestra. Despite being a cofounder of Fourth Way, however, White was forced to amplify his violin—a prospect that he was not entirely comfortable with and would contribute to his leaving the band later. Ironically, White's commitment to playing acoustically had already been compromised with Handy, which had prompted his earlier leave.

There was an attraction beyond the music that energized The Fourth Way's early efforts. White had been interested in the relationship between music and spirituality, as well, and his interest would continue in his solo career post-The Fourth Way. Nock and White's mutual interest in alternative harmonic schemes as well as non-swing rhythms gave their music an unconventional sound—particularly for a jazz band at the time—and indicated the band's growing distance from jazz. The way in which the band members soloed, however, followed the contours of a jazz musician's solo rather than the path a rock musician might take by using, for example, the extended harmonic vocabulary developed in bebop and post-bop jazz.

Undoubtedly, however, like their rock counterparts, The Fourth Way was animated by the interest in Eastern religions and non-Christian spirituality that led the countercultural scene in the San Francisco Bay Area to focus on individualist metaphysical transcendence rather than collective material or political concerns. In fact, the band's name was not only inspired by pianist Nock's interest in G. I. Gurdjieff and P. D. Ouspensky but also reflected violinist White's shared if varied interest in spiritual and philosophical matters. Gurdjieff had described his teachings as the Fourth Way, a path distinct from other spiritual practices he described as way of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi.

The liner notes to *The Fourth Way*'s debut recording quoted Ouspensky: "The sense of four-dimensional space/Spatial sensation of time/The return to the law inside oneself/A New Conscience/The realization of oneself as an independent unit/The commencement of self-consciousness/Ecstatic states/Transitions to cosmic consciousness."²⁶ Fittingly, Gurdjieff taught that music and movement was integral to achieving spiritual enlightenment, composing and performing music alone and in collaboration with Russian composer, Thomas de Hartmann. De Hartmann emphasized Gurdjieff's idea, stating, "After the work of [Gurdjieff], we can understand [the role of music in spiritual practice] more, we can understand it better, that music helps to concentrate oneself, to bring oneself to an inner state when we can assume the greatest possible emanations. That is why music is just the thing which helps you to see higher."²⁷ Nock and White, in particular, believed that their music could be pressed into the service of spiritual goals. Nock acknowledged the link between spiritual and musical ideas that were fundamental to the band: "The name came about because I had an interest in Gurdjieff's ideas and liked the title *The Fourth Way* for many reasons including the fact I'd been interested in pursuing the idea of quartal harmony for several years, as opposed to tertiary based harmony. Michael White also had similar leanings."²⁸

Drummer Marshall, however, while acknowledging that Nock conceived the band as invested with a spiritual agenda, gently giped his former bandmate: "There was no one else like him in the band. Mike was always reading these weird philosophers, and he named the group *The Fourth Way*. None of us even knew what he was talking about for years."²⁹ Marshall's hesitancy to claim the "weird philosophers" as possible touchstones for the band's music speaks to the different positions found within the counterculture. Unlike the seamless "youth movement" that the mainstream press described and would eventually lampoon, the band members reflected the patchwork of ideological persuasions caught under the "youth movement/1960s counterculture" quilt, a heterogeneity that is particularly salient when thinking in the context of the hothouse of countercultural activities and organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area at the time. Hippies and countercultural types were a relatively small segment of the youth population in 1968, and people moved in and out of countercultural allegiances, spaces, and activities.³⁰

In fact, *The Fourth Way* also claimed influences from various indigenous and Afrodiasporic musical traditions filtered primarily by jazz performance and practice routines, though the members of *The Fourth Way* never claimed to be trained in or attempted performing authentic folk or indigenous music traditions. Indeed, while Nock was the primary composer as well as the band's musical director, he acknowledges that much of the music achieved its final form through the live interactions among the four musicians—a practice George Lewis termed *Afrological* to indicate the reliance on musical priorities formed under Afrodiasporic conditions of displacement and dispersal.³¹

The band's merging of jazz and rock contested the particular racialization of jazz and rock by musically sounding out the engagement of racial difference. Indeed, by crafting an aesthetic out of "seemingly antagonistic relationships as non-contradictory oppositions," *The Fourth Way* challenged the notion of an oppositional white and black "sounding world" as well as a "high" and "low" cultural hierarchy, musically performing the countercultural ideals regarding racial inclusion and universal humanism band members espoused more explicitly in liner notes and interviews.³²

By pursuing an interest in popular music, The Fourth Way challenged both mainstream and free jazz artists, who explicitly argued that their music be considered high art, by enacting a populist rather than an elitist aesthetic program. That The Fourth Way embarked on an aesthetic rather than an explicitly political agenda echoes Zimmerman's observation that the hippie counterculture "[exemplified] how the counterculture appropriated the antiofficial, outlaw sensibility of the [Black] Panthers, while remaining one step removed from participatory racial politics."³³

But the racial politics of the day were unavoidable and played a role in the band's reception as it ran into the black power politics of the time. Nock: "The fact that we were a mixed [race] band was a positive, but for some people it was a negative; maybe some black promoters, or some young kids saying, 'These guys [Marshall and White] shouldn't be playing with these honkies.' That happened. The reverse wouldn't have happened, I don't think."³⁴ Nock implies that some young black listeners criticized the two black musicians for playing in a mixed-race band but that young white listeners did not mind or at least were not vocal about any discomfort with the racial makeup of the ensemble. But Nock is forgetting that white fascination with blackness, especially as expressed through a love of black music, is connected to white fans' abilities to enter and exit the space of black music in ways that are impossible for blacks. As Baraka keenly observed, whites can flow more easily from a bohemian lifestyle based on black culture by simply exchanging their denim for suits, but black individuals are always black—a suit does little to hide the fact of black skin.³⁵

Nock's comment also ignores the long history of the racialization of music genres that help to dictate the kind of musicians who are deemed authentic or authoritative in a specific genre. This ideological assumption—certain musicians perform certain kinds of music more authentically or legitimately than other kinds of musicians—constrains both audiences and musicians and often leads to musicians feeling forced to comply with those expectations or suffer the economic liabilities of following their personal aesthetic interests. Black musicians, in particular, have suffered disproportionately, especially if one considers how much of the twentieth and twenty-first century popular music enjoys deep African American roots.

This situation did not necessarily preclude musicians from interacting across the color line—all the stories about black, white, and Latin music artists jamming in after-hours joints bear repeating here—but it had a serious impact on black- and brown-skinned musicians' professional lives where those sort of mixtures were suppressed in public performance spaces, record company contracts, and advertising and distribution networks, which effectively foreclosed their equal participation in the mainstream pop music market. While critics disparage the mainstream pop music market, musicians (black or white) often seek its higher monetary rewards foregoing critics' less material praise and acclaim as part of the price of mass popularity. The Fourth Way grappled with the racialized difference embedded within musical discourse that would lead to the generic rupture jazz critics would eventually dub somewhat dismissively as "fusion" or "jazz rock."

However, in 1968, no one had heard of "fusion music" yet. The worlds of jazz and rock were moving along separate if sometimes parallel paths. Musicians, critics, and fans maintained that there were a number of key differences between the two genres. While jazz record sales had never been huge (and, ironically, fusion

musicians would post the highest sales for nominal jazz recordings in the early 1970s though their sales remained far below those for rock and pop recordings), at least jazz music was considered art music. Jazz observers and musicians worried over the notion that rock music would eventually be taken seriously as art—and evaluated higher than jazz by some—as not only a grossly mistaken aesthetic evaluation but also as an economic threat. Worse yet, fusion allowed rock musicians to initiate forays into jazz music. Jazz observers feared that rock musicians' participation diluted the decades of struggle for legitimacy by black artists for their music.

It did not help that many young fusion musicians and their audiences were white. In a time of Black Power politics and an increasing attention to the politics of identity, the tensions between jazz musicians and rock musicians for consumer attention was racialized, particularly in the politicized circles of many free jazz and mainstream jazz performers, both white and black. Fusion, then, was a way to express the mixture of these two genres as compatible rather than incommensurable. It is in this light that I wish to turn to the music of *The Fourth Way*.

Everyman's Your Brother

"Everyman's Your Brother," the opening track to *The Fourth Way's* debut recording, is emblematic of the ideals the group would espouse over its short career. The song title plays on the words "every man" and "Everyman" suggesting that not only could every man be your brother but that he was also an ordinary person. Importantly, linking "every man" to the category of "Everyman" spoke to a desire to transcend the types of differences, such as race or class, which have often been used to separate rather than join individuals and groups across those differences. This notion of fusing difference in this way is represented musically by Marshall's subtle interweaving within the eight-measure drum intro of rock's "straight 8ths" and a funky backbeat—a meeting of a "white" genre and a "black" one, both "Everyman," rather than art, musical genres. Once McClure's electric bass enters with a funky walking line, Marshall uses the bass drum to accent on the pulse while maintaining the rock feel on an open snare drum. In the third section of the composition, the rhythm becomes much more rock-oriented. This introductory track immediately signals the band's departure from mainstream jazz and nearer, in many ways, to rock with an arrangement that highlights Nock's electric piano solo in a modern rock setting.

The main theme is performed in unison by the electric piano and violin. A chorus or interlude section between two passes through the "head," or song structure, shifts to a more straightforward rock pattern with the bass sounding evenly on the pulse. The solo section as a whole has the driving yet static feel of a rock rave-up, especially as Marshall's drumming increases in intensity, and the track sounds like it would have been a great song to experience live. White's violin sounds like a small string section due to the doubling on bowed bass McClure provides (McClure performs on both electric and acoustic bass on this track) as they repeat the V-IV-I harmonic progression underneath Nock's solo. After Nock's solo, the band returns to the main theme, performing the complete form before fading out on the repetition of the final riff while slowing the tempo of the composition, ending with an upward glissando flourish of Nock's electric piano.³⁶

The music *is* Everyman's music: concise riffing, blues-tinged soloing, alternately funky and rocking bass and drum cross-rhythms that lock onto a groove throughout the entire track, giving the entire song an overlaying coherence and accessibility. Yet given the racialization of genres—jazz is a black American musical form, rock is seen as a genre produced by white musicians for white audiences—the merging of the two was roundly dismissed by many jazz critics at the time as a regrettable attempt to gain younger audiences and larger record sales. But for young musicians such as Nock, White, Marshall, and McClure, this was a logical “next step.” They didn't see jazz and rock as having hopelessly incompatible aesthetics. They blended the supposed incommensurable musical worlds of jazz and rock into what became known as jazz-rock or fusion music by late 1970 because, unlike many of their jazz peers, they respected and enjoyed rock as much as jazz, unapologetically utilizing elements from rock that not only challenged but often threatened to overwhelm any jazz features. The elements that help identify early fusion are present: the electric instrumentation, including an amplified acoustic violin; the interweaving of rock, soul, and jazz rhythms; the experimental flourishes, especially in terms of form and timbre; and the creation and reception of this music in venues favored by young rock audiences as well as at jazz clubs.

Conclusion

While the band members espoused spiritual aims in conjunction with their music, Nock was clearly excited by the prospect of an “outrageous sum of money” from a contract with Capitol Records. That he was not alone in the dialectical struggle between spiritual belief and material necessity can be inferred by Michael White's recruitment by another record company, Impulse, that was successful, in part, by promising to focus on making White a solo star, thereby effectively breaking up the band. Still, while it was active, The Fourth Way combined the spiritual and the material to create a music that is transcendent as well as grooving, ethereal yet grounded.

It may matter little that the members of the band have all performed and recorded with other leading jazz musicians including John Abercrombie, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Michael Brecker, Randy Brecker, Kenny Burrell, Jack DeJohnette, Al Foster, Stan Getz, Eddie Gomez, Dexter Gordon, John Handy, Billy Hart, Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Ahmad Jamal, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, John Klemmer, Lee Konitz, Yusef Lateef, Dave Liebman, Charles Lloyd, Bobby McFerrin, Art Pepper, Michel Petrucciani, John Scofield, and Archie Shepp.³⁷ In the end, The Fourth Way was eclipsed by the commercial imperatives signaled by White's departure from the band. Ironically, the release of Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* announced the arrival of fusion to the larger jazz and popular music world just as The Fourth Way were breaking up. Davis, in taking young musicians' genre-merging underground style “above ground,” ended up being credited by jazz critics with transforming jazz in the process and relegating bands that had already been playing with jazz and rock such as The Fourth Way to the historical dustbin. Like the hippies who left the Haight once mass popularity and commercialism sullied the original ideals of an often unorganized and inchoate movement, The Fourth Way folded under the contradictions that underlay the divided concern between spirituality and selling records

and concert tickets. Such tensions are often caricatured in popular music discourse as a face-off between Woodstock and Altamont, the Janus-faced visions of the hippie counterculture that failed to recognize its own entanglements with capitalism, bourgeois notions of the individual, and the legacies of the systemic differentials of power between individuals and institutions.

The Fourth Way example can be used, perhaps, to argue that these tensions and contradictions may have been insurmountable. Still, as Herbert Marcuse declared in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, “Inasmuch as art preserves, with the promise of happiness, the memory of the goals that failed, it can enter, as a ‘regulative idea,’ the desperate struggle for changing the world. Against all fetishism of the productive forces, against the continued enslavement of individuals by the objective conditions (which remain those of domination), art represents the ultimate goal of all revolutions: the freedom and happiness of the individual.”³⁸ In this light, The Fourth Way “entered as a regulative idea in the desperate struggle for changing the world” and like many others who shared the band’s high ideals and that motivated many of the events of 1968, these musicians would find that their ideals would continue to challenge the reactionary forces, material concerns, and political realignments of the following decade.

Notes

1. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995 [1968]), xxxiv.
2. Maureen Mahon, *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
3. An important work that held that jazz had developed a growing sophistication through an engagement with European art music was written by composer and writer Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Development* (NY and London: Oxford University Press, 1968). For a defense of jazz as a black art form, see LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (NY: William Morrow and Company, 1963).
4. For a considered view of the position of white criticism, see Marshall Stearns, *The Story of Jazz* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1956). For a polemical view of the situation in the late 1960s from a black perspective, see Amiri Baraka (writing as LeRoi Jones), *Blues People* (NY: William Morrow and Company, 1963). For a study of free jazz musicians, see David Such, *Avant-garde Jazz Musicians: Performing “Out There”* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993) and Valerie Wilmer, *As Serious as Your Life: John Coltrane and Beyond* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1992 [1977]).
For a cogent study of the history of jazz discourse with regard to its status as art, see Paul Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
5. An indication of the gravity of *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* was indicated by the fact that it was the first rock album to include its lyrics, which were printed on the inside of the gatefold sleeve. This, the Beatles seemed to be asserting, was no mere pop recording. For an indication of the growing acknowledgment about rock’s increasing sophistication by the intelligentsia, see Brandeis art history professor Carl Belz’s 1969 book, *The Story of Rock* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1972).
6. Even when fusion became highly visible and commercially viable, the rock press had little interest in the music beyond Miles Davis’s *Bitches Brew* (Columbia Records, 1970) and the Mahavishnu Orchestra.

7. See, for example, Amiri Baraka (writing as LeRoi Jones), *Blues People: The Negro Experience in White America and the Music That Developed From It* and, for jazz musicians' views that are more contemporaneous with the events described in the text, see drummer Art Taylor's book of interviews conducted between 1968 and 1972 with over two hundred jazz artists speaking directly to this issue in *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993 [1977]).
8. Zimmerman, 29.
9. Zimmerman, 35.
10. Slick is quoted in Patrick Burke, "Tear Down the Walls: Jefferson Airplane, Race, and Revolutionary Rhetoric in 1960s rock," 62.
11. Quoted in Zimmerman, 60.
12. Marsh's notes can be found on *East-West Live*, a recording keyboardist Naftalin released on his *Winner* label in 1996.
13. According to the IMDB (Internet Movie Database) entry on the Monterey Pop festival, the lone exception was the \$3,000 fee paid to Indian sitar master, Ravi Shankar. According to the webpage, "When John Phillips and Lou Adler took over the promotion of the festival from the original promoters, they decided to honor Shankar's original contract."
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monterey_Pop_Festival (accessed March 10, 2010).
 Moreover, according to the website, "Grateful Dead Time Capsule," the Grateful Dead "protested the commercialism of the event by setting up their own stage with 'borrowed' equipment, and refused to sign a release for the documentary film."
<http://www.dead101.com/1195.htm> (accessed March 10, 2010).
14. Besides Ellwood, see Ronald B. Flowers's *Religion in Strange Times: the 1960s and 1970s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984).
15. Zimmerman, 58.
16. For a perspective from an ex-hippie "insider," see Charles Perry's *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* (New York: Wenner Books, 2005). While somewhat nostalgic in tone and skewed to Perry's subjective experience of the years he covers, 1965–1968, the text is hampered somewhat by its dry litany of names and dates at the beginning. The text reveals a bit more about the sense of the times when Perry inserts his journal entries from 1967 in the middle of the text but, again, it is a highly subjective view. There is also Barry Miles's *Hippie* (London: Sterling Press, 2005), an oversized "coffee table" book that is primarily a photo-documentary of the period. However, Miles does provide text that contextualizes the images and reports on the global nature of the movement rather than solely focusing on San Francisco.
17. For more on the impact of FM radio in the 1970s, see Richard Neer, *FM: The Rise and Fall of Rock Radio* (New York: Random House-Villard Press, 2001). For a broader survey of rock radio, see Marc Fisher, *Something in the Air: Radio, Rock, and the Revolution That Shaped a Generation* (New York: Random House, 2007).
18. Meehan, 113–114. For more on Bill Graham, see *Bill Graham Presents: My Life inside Rock and Out* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2004).
19. Readers can hear the Cream advertisement on the website, "PowerPop: Annals of Late Capitalism": http://powerpop.blogspot.com/2012/10/annals-of-late-capitalism-special-this_17.html
 The Jefferson Airplane advertisement can be heard here:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gw0C5Sga6So>
20. For a perhaps jaundiced view of the contradiction between revolutionary rhetoric and commercial interests that was inherent in the aspirations of rock musicians in this time period, see Peter Doggett, *There's a Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars, and the*

- Rise and Fall of 1960s Counter-Culture* (London and New York: Canongate Books US, 2009).
21. Quoted in Jeff Tamarkin, "Jefferson Airplane: The Summer of Haight," *Mojo* April 2003. Accessed online at [rocksbackpages.com: Jefferson Airplane/2003/Jeff Tamarkin/Mojo/Jefferson Airplane: The Summer Of Haight/12/08/2012 04:51:17/http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=19203](http://www.rocksbackpages.com:Jefferson%20Airplane/2003/Jeff%20Tamarkin/Mojo/Jefferson%20Airplane:The%20Summer%20Of%20Haight/12/08/2012%2004:51:17/http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=19203) (accessed October 7, 2012).
 22. Meehan, 183.
 23. Meehan, 125.
 24. Meehan, 68.
 25. Meehan, 112.
 26. *The Fourth Way*, liner notes (Capitol ST-317, 1969).
 27. Thomas de Hartmann discussing the role of music in Gurdjieff's teachings on the recording, *The Music of Gurdjieff/de Hartmann* (New York: G-H Records, 1971).
 28. Personal communication, January 31, 2012.
 29. Meehan, 120.
 30. Besides the Charles Perry and Barry Miles books cited in note 7, see *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, edited by Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, for more on the fluidity of participation within the counterculture.
 31. See George Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives" *Black Music Research Journal* v22 Supplement: Best of BMRJ (2002; originally published in *BMRJ* v16 n1 [1996]): 214–246.
 32. Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Getrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Random House-Vintage, 1998), xv.
 33. Zimmerman, 33.
 34. Meehan, 153.
 35. See Baraka, *Blues People*.
 36. If you listen closely to the entire fadeout, you will hear the band closing the song by slowing down on the final riff of the A section, performing in an increasingly "square" manner before the song ends in a final flourish with an upward glissando on the electric piano.
 37. Tragically, Marshall died in 2011 from a heart attack at the age of 73, as reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (Wednesday, September 14, 2011), available here: <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/09/13/BAE21L3EDP.DTL>>
 38. Marcuse, 69.

CHAPTER 10

“A Weapon in Our Struggle for Liberation”: Black Arts, Black Power, and the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival

Samir Meghelli

“**W**e are still Black and we have come back. *Nous sommes revenus* [‘We have returned’]. We have come back and brought back to our land, Africa, the music of Africa. Jazz is a Black Power! Jazz is a Black Power! Jazz is an African Power! Jazz is an African music! Jazz is an African music! We have come back!” proclaimed African American poet Ted Joans as he stood before an audience in the overcrowded streets of Algiers, Algeria, at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival in July 1969. He continued the poem, emphasizing his French phrases to ensure the largely Francophone African crowd would understand him: “*Nous sommes revenus. Nous sommes les Noirs Américains, les Afro-Américains, les Africains des Etats-Unis. Mais, le premier chose, nous sommes Africains.*” [“We have returned. We are Black Americans, Afro-Americans, Africans of the United States. But foremost, we are Africans.”]¹ Next to Ted Joans was an animated and commanding Archie Shepp, pacing across the stage playing his saxophone. Riding over and through Shepp’s melodies were the rhythms of the Algerian Tuareg² musicians who stood nearby, beating at their drums. The audience responded with uproarious applause and spurred on what was to become a classic jazz recording, Archie Shepp’s *Live at the Panafrican Festival*.³ Shortly after the performance, Shepp was interviewed about the experience by the Algerian national newspaper, *El Moudjahid*. He described the moment’s meaning in personal and political terms: “In my opinion, jazz is the music of all the long-lost Africans in America. So, I am happy to be here in Algeria: it is a return to Africa after 500 years of estrangement.”⁴

The epic display of improvisation and transnational collaboration between Archie Shepp, Ted Joans, their bandmates, and the Algerian Tuareg musicians took

place as part of one of the twentieth century's most significant pan-African gatherings: the "First Pan-African Cultural Festival" of July and August 1969. Occurring at a critical moment in the history of the African and African American freedom struggles, the festival brought together thousands of official delegates and visitors from more than 30 African nations, and from North and South America, the Caribbean, East Asia, and Europe.⁵ Musicians, writers, filmmakers, visual artists, politicians, scholars, and liberation movement leaders convened under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) to discuss, explore, and display the role of culture in revolutionary movements. By July 1969, with three-fourths of African nations having already gained independence from the European colonial powers and with the civil rights movement in the United States having secured the right to vote for African Americans, culture became an increasingly important battleground for progress.

Cultural and political movements were afoot in both postcolonial Africa and in African America that viewed culture as central to the continuing struggle for freedom. In the United States, the Black Power movement and its "aesthetic and spiritual sister"⁶ the Black Arts Movement sought to deploy culture as a key tool in the project of political liberation. Historian William Van Deburg rightly notes that "Black Power was both a cultural and a political revolt, each thrust reinforcing the other."⁷ As he explains, "since culture could be seen as a 'whole way of life' encompassing the economic, political, social, and aesthetic aspects of a people's existence, the work of black artists was capable of accomplishing liberation in the temporal as well as in the 'spiritual' realm."⁸ In many of the African independence movements, culture was also considered crucial: as the repository for the history, character, and quality of the community, and as an integral force in solidifying a mass-based political consciousness necessary for overthrowing the colonial powers. And in many newly independent African countries, artists of all kinds were directly linked to the nation-building project, either as official collaborators or as harsh critics.⁹

In his remarks at the 1959 Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Rome, Italy, Guinean president Sékou Touré captured the meaning and significance that many African leaders, intellectuals, and freedom fighters assigned to the role of culture in the pursuit of African independence:

To take part in the African revolution it is not enough to write a revolutionary song; you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion it with the people, the songs will come by themselves, and of themselves. In order to achieve real action, you must yourself be a living part of Africa and of her thought; you must be an element of that popular energy which is entirely called forth for the freeing, the progress, and the happiness of Africa. There is no place outside that fight for the artist or for the intellectual who is not himself concerned with and completely at one with the people in the great battle of Africa and of suffering humanity.¹⁰

Frantz Fanon, the Martinican-born psychiatrist who later renounced his French citizenship and joined the Algerian independence movement, quoted from that

speech in the opening to his chapter "On National Culture" in his widely read and cited book, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Marien Ngouabi, former president of the Republic of Congo, also echoed Sekou Touré's sentiment when Ngouabi commented:

The aim of our culture is not to lull our friends with fairy stories, nor to boast of our art or civilisation—in a word, our knowledge of human sciences. It has a more important part to play, namely to awaken in the African a sentiment of striving for the national liberation of the continent. It is not even a question of proclaiming or glorifying our heroes, though this is indispensable. African culture should be the light which guides our combatants towards national liberation, because it will enable Africans to free themselves. For when a vast continent such as ours is able to appreciate and to defend its culture, this means that it is determined to fight.¹¹

African revolutionary and intellectual Amílcar Cabral, whose ideas found great resonance among African American activists in the 1960s and early 1970s, also saw culture as playing a critical role in continued efforts at liberation:

The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated. Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment, among men or groups of men within a society, as well as among different societies.¹²

There were, of course, important differences in belief over what sort of organized form—if any—a continent-wide or transnational diasporic cultural movement could take, but there was also consensus that culture could not be detached from the ongoing African independence movements or from the ongoing efforts to maintain newfound independence and autonomy. In the United States, *Liberator* magazine, one among a number of important periodicals of the Black Arts and Black Power movements, often featured articles and interviews with artists that similarly contemplated the role of art and the artist in the struggle. Topics and titles such as the following made this connection explicit: "Black Revolution in Music: a talk with drummer Milford Graves," "Keep on Pushin': Rhythm and Blues as a Weapon," "Revolutionary Theatre," and "The Black Writer's Role." In the 1966 article, "The Black Writer's Role," Larry Neal, one of the Black Arts Movement's foremost theorists, wrote:

The Black creative artist is ensnared in a constricted web of contradictions and assertions which, if not resolved, will leave the artist far behind the socio-political thrust of his people. If the Black artist truly desires to be an artist of his people, his work must have an affinity with whatever political and social forces are working toward Black liberation.¹³

In an August 1969 *Ebony* magazine article titled “Any Day Now: Black Art and Black Liberation,” Neal added:

The Black Arts movement seeks to link, in a highly conscious manner, art and politics in order to assist in the liberation of Black people. The Black Arts movement, therefore, reasons that this linking must take place along lines that are rooted in an Afro-American and Third World historical and cultural sensibility. By ‘Third World,’ we mean that we see our struggle in the context of the global confrontations occurring in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We identify with all of the righteous forces in those places which are struggling for human dignity.¹⁴

Neal articulated what many on the African continent understood about the centrality of the African American freedom struggle to the dismantling of imperialism around the globe when he wrote: “The Afro-American is that part of the Third World situated in the belly of the beast. The key to its destruction. The world, so carefully described by Fanon, is waiting to see just how the deal will go down.”¹⁵

In the midst of the global unrest of the late 1960s, many activists and intellectuals on the African continent and in the diaspora recognized their efforts as being closely aligned. Whether through movement organizations, lobby groups, or arts endeavors, African Americans and Africans attempted to forge stronger ties with one another and to map out the inextricable links between their respective struggles for freedom.¹⁶ The increasing evidence of collaboration between American institutions (such as the Central Intelligence Agency or large corporations) and counterrevolutionary forces in Africa made evident the necessity of these transnational solidarities.¹⁷ Alongside political strategizing and practical support, culture was mobilized as a potential force for social change. This preoccupation with culture and with the transnational linkages between continental African and diasporic movements was not unique to the era of the 1960s. An entire tradition can be traced back at least to the New Negro Renaissance (or what is often referred to as the Harlem Renaissance) and the Négritude movement of the early part of the twentieth century.¹⁸ But for many activists of the Black Arts Movement, even those who were influenced by the work of the New Negro Renaissance artists, this earlier movement was seen as too disconnected from practical political work to be truly effective. For instance, Black Arts proponent Larry Neal, who was himself deeply influenced by New Negro poets Langston Hughes and Sterling Brown,¹⁹ nonetheless felt (echoing the sentiment of Harold Cruse) that the “Harlem Renaissance...was essentially a failure” because “it failed to take roots, to link itself concretely to the struggles of that community, to become its voice and spirit.”²⁰ The Black Arts Movement was proposing a much more radical engagement with its public—in community centers and out on the streets—while simultaneously maintaining a deeper dedication to the idea that art had to move people into action. Larry Neal captured this sentiment:

Poetry is a concrete function, an action. No more abstractions. Poems are physical entities: fists, daggers, airplane poems, and poems that shoot guns. Poems are transformed from physical objects into personal forces... The poem comes to

stand for the collective conscious and unconscious of Black America—the real impulse in back of the Black Power movement, which is the will toward self-determination and nationhood, a radical reordering of the nature and function of both art and the artist.²¹

Indeed, then, this moment in the late 1960s was ripe for the staging of a festival that would wrestle with this key issue of the role of culture in revolutionary movements. Taken within the context of the Black Power and Black Arts movements, as well as the African anticolonial and postcolonial efforts, the First Pan-African Cultural Festival represented a crucial opportunity for the African continent—through its Organization of African Unity—to make a case for its cultural and intellectual richness, to renounce European and Euro-American social and intellectual domination, and to bring artists and activists from across the African continent and diaspora into conversation with one another. And although there had been a number of other seemingly similar cultural festivals in preceding years—notably the 1966 Negro Arts Festival in Dakar, Senegal—none matched the radical spirit and eventual impact of the Algiers gathering.

From the very beginning of the Pan-African Festival, Nathan Hare, an African American sociologist and coordinator of the first Black Studies program at an American university, observed a "contrast in the type of Black Americans at the [Negro Arts Festival in Dakar and the Festival in Algiers]."²² He noted that "Dakar had collected the most well-known artists and entertainers, the Duke Ellingtons and the like; Algiers had attracted the new breed young militant whether those of fame, those on the rise, or those yet to begin the making of their names."²³ In addition to being criticized for having appealed to an elite audience—and by the accounts of some, to have been "attended by ninety-percent European and American whites"²⁴—the Negro Arts Festival was also widely criticized for being backed by AMSAC (the American Society of African Culture), which was exposed less than a year later as having been secretly funded by the C.I.A. (Central Intelligence Agency).²⁵

One of the Dakar Festival's most insistent and outspoken critics, South African poet Keorapetse Kgotsitsile, decried what he saw as the decidedly apolitical nature of the gathering and its heavily pro-Négritude, pro-Western leanings. The promising new wave of young radicals, Kgotsitsile argued, "realize that the most beautiful poem [Senegalese President Léopold] Senghor can write about the validity of the existence of a glorious Black culture, without attempting to make the social institutions in Senegal actually African, actually liberated from France, does not even improve the diet of a single undernourished black child anywhere in the world where black people are colonized by Caucasians; most probably not even in 'independent' Senegal."²⁶ Another critic, Afro-Brazilian scholar-activist Abdias Do Nascimento, wrote an open letter to the Dakar Festival excoriating its organizers for excluding Afro-Brazilians from the Brazilian delegation, while he also sent a message of solidarity to the attendees.²⁷ Although the Algiers Festival—which occurred a mere three years later—was not without its detractors, too, few could criticize it for a lack of revolutionary credentials. It proved to be an important meeting ground for the emerging generation of activists and artists of the continent and diaspora.

**“There Was a Battle in Algiers...”:
A Clash of Culture and Politics at the
First Pan-African Cultural Festival of 1969**

*There was a battle in Algiers in late July, with lighter skirmishes both old and new, and emerging signs of struggle which now lurk ready to boomerang around the world in the years (and months) to come. The troops came together, African generals and footsoldiers in the war of words and politics that splashed against the calm waters of the Mediterranean Sea—in the First Pan-African Cultural Festival—from everywhere in greater numbers than ever before; from San Francisco to Senegal, from Dakar to the District of Columbia.*²⁸

—Nathan Hare, “Algiers 1969: A Report on the
Pan-African Cultural Festival”

The idea for the Pan-African Cultural Festival first took shape in September 1967 at a Council of Ministers meeting of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) in Kinshasa, Congo, when attendees decided, “There is an urgent need to undertake common measures that would assist in the popularizing, development and refinement of the various cultures obtaining in Africa.”²⁹ The O.A.U. passed a resolution to “sponsor an All-African Festival of African Drama, Folk Song, and Instrumental Music.”³⁰ Not long afterward, the Algerian government, with assistance from the O.A.U., went about publicizing the July–August 1969 gathering. Anticipation was quick to build, as the African press—as varied as *Fraternité Matin* of the Ivory Coast, *L’Effort Camerounais* of Cameroon, *Jeune Afrique*, a French-language pan-African magazine published in Paris, *La Semaine* of Congo-Brazzaville, *El-Ayam* of Sudan—along with many magazines and newspapers throughout Europe, America, and the Caribbean announced the approaching First Pan-African Cultural Festival.³¹ In one example, *Jeune Afrique* magazine dedicated an entire page to the festival under the title “L’Art Africain Descend Dans La Rue” [“African Art Goes Out Into the Streets”]:

This summer, from July 21 to August 1, there will be a unique Festival in Algiers, a Festival like none ever seen before: the First Pan-African Cultural Festival... It will be nothing like those very specialized cultural festivals that happen a little bit all over the place during vacation, and which are practically reserved for elite tourists. Most importantly, the Algiers Festival will be for the people. But, this large festival for the people will have all the importance and weight of a celebration of liberation.³²

In the United States, the African American press played an important role in publicizing the festival. *Muhammad Speaks*, the weekly paper of the Nation of Islam and one of the most widely circulating African American papers of the day, ran several articles in anticipation of the festival. One such article, titled “Algerian Festival to Spotlight Africa’s Vast Cultural Heritage,” reported:

Massive preparations are under way for the First Pan-African Cultural Festival... Black artists from America and 15 African nations will attend and

museums throughout the continent are sending works of art—some hundreds of years old—to the cultural festival, which promises to be the greatest event in the history of Africa, if not the entire world.³³

In addition to publicity in the press, travel agencies began organizing and advertising group tours of Africa that centered around the Pan-African Festival in Algiers. *Africa Tourist and Travel Agency*, based in New York City, printed out brochures for a tour they organized specifically for the festival and that they called the "Organization for African Unity Cultural Festival Tour."³⁴ The tour was to last a total of 21 days, from July 21 to August 11, 1969, would include travel through Morocco and Algeria, and was to be hosted by a "tour personality," renowned Jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal. Other travel agencies and Black activist organizations likely organized similar group trips to attend the festival.

Michele Russell, an African American woman living and working in Washington, DC, described how she first heard of the Festival:

My trip to Algeria actually began in May with a note in my mailbox at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. where I was working. Typed across the top of the page was the legend:

WE ARE AN AFRICAN PEOPLE

And as if to test that assertion, an announcement followed of a group trip to Algeria, being planned to attend the First Pan-African Cultural Festival...³⁵

The eagerness of the attendees of the Festival mirrored the triumphant language of the newspaper and magazine announcements of the approaching event. Dave Burrell, a young Jazz pianist who was invited to play at the festival, described his and his bandmates' preparations for their departure:

Before we went, we got as African as we could get in New York... The dashikis had just come into vogue, and we were sort of very much in the vanguard of the movement... [We had] to run around New York and get African material and make the dashikis and the different skullcaps and to have the Black Power sign... I remember [Jazz musician and bandmate] Sunny Murray saying to me, 'Hey, I joined the [Black] Panthers.' I said, 'What?' He said, 'Yeah, don't tell anybody.' He showed me a little membership card.³⁶

Sunny Murray was part of a growing number of Jazz musicians that became Black Panthers and who were dedicated members of the Black Power movement. The anticipation was felt among all who were going. Henri Lopes, a budding writer and Minister of Education for Congo-Brazzaville who was helping lead that country's delegation to the festival, was also quite eager and excited, as he recounted:

My arrival in Algeria was met with great emotion, in large part because our political consciousness... was cultivated as a result of our knowledge of the Algerian

war for independence. And so, for us, it was the country that had obtained genuine independence, more so than most African countries, and to arrive there, it was like going to a Rome or a Mecca... Secondly, the artists—the creators in Africa—each one of us was isolated in our countries. Africa was not a society that took the artist very seriously. And the Festival gave us all the opportunity to meet one another, to exchange ideas with another, and try to get to know one another. We [French-speaking Africans] didn't know very well the literature of South Africa and the English-speaking [African] colonies... Thus, the Festival represented a tangible image of what could one day be a united Africa.³⁷

In the months leading up to the festival, the Algerian government remained busy solidifying its plans, including meeting with and confirming appearances by delegations from all over Africa, and finishing construction and renovation of facilities throughout the city of Algiers (e.g., cinema, theater, and national gallery).³⁸ The Algerian national newspaper, *El Moudjahid*, also contributed to the preparations by publishing articles on topics such as African history, art, and culture, the African American freedom struggle, and the writings and ideas of African intellectuals. This was part of an initiative in mass-based education for the Algerian public, meant to provide social and historical context for what they were going to witness in the streets of their capital city, Algiers, in a matter of only weeks.

The festival opened on July 21, 1969, with a speech from Algerian president Houari Boumedienne, which began:

Algeria is happy to welcome the First Pan-African Cultural Festival on behalf of our entire continent. The importance of this event and the joy and enthusiasm which it has aroused and is still arousing, the diversity and quality of the manifestations to which it will give rise, should not make us forget to what an extent this first Pan-African Cultural Festival is concerned, not only with our values and sensitivities, but also with our very existence as Africans and our common future.

This Festival, far from being an occasion for general festivities which might momentarily distract us from our daily tasks and problems, should rather be related to them and make a direct connection to our vast effort of construction. It constitutes an intrinsic part of the struggle we are all pursuing in Africa – whether that of development, of the struggle against racialism, or of national liberation.

Our continent, three-quarters of which is liberated, but which is fully master of its destiny, is undertaking the task, with this First Pan-African Cultural Festival, of holding the greatest artistic and literary reunion at a continental scale in history, commensurate with all facets of its expression. By the same token, it takes a further step forward in the continuing struggle against all forms of domination.³⁹

He ended by saying,

Now that the Festival is beginning, I should like to join you in expressing the hope that this meeting will be the beginning of a new era for our culture and that our efforts will be crowned with success.⁴⁰

El Moudjahid was quick to find peoples' first impressions of the Pan-African Festival, questioning people on the street and publishing the responses in an article titled "Le Coeur d'Alger Bat Au Rythme Du Festival" ("The Heart of Algiers Beats to the Rhythm of the Festival"). A young Algerian painter named Abdout responded:

The Algerian Festival is presenting itself in a serious fashion compared to other festivals around the world. It will be more complete. It will show the new height of African art. It will also be an occasion to discover African music. It will allow our artists to become more familiar with the realities of African culture. Most of all, it will present the opportunity to exchange ideas and points of view with African painters and artists. In my case, I hope to see as many expositions and performances as possible.⁴¹

On the very same page in that issue of the newspaper, there was an article titled "Quand Le Jazz Se Veut Arme De Combat" ("When Jazz Looks To Be A Weapon of Combat"), in which was reprinted a poem by the African American poet Ted Joans called "Behind the Smile of Black Jazz." Each and every day over the period of two weeks, *El Moudjahid* covered in great detail the events and happenings in Algiers. There were daily symposia around issues of critical importance to the social, political, cultural, and economic development of Africa, as well as musical, theatrical, and dance performances throughout city.

One of the festival's most popular symposia presentations was made by Stanislas Adotevi, professor of Philosophy and Commissioner General for Culture and Youth of Dahomey (present-day Benin). His speech set forth a devastating critique of the concept of Négritude, a concept that had reigned at the 1966 Dakar Festival but that was increasingly coming under attack. Adotevi, who would a few years later publish the incisive text *Négritude et Négrologues* [*Négritude and Negrologists*] (1972), argued at the festival: "There's no longer any need to speak of Négritude, because the Negroes of Africa know that they are Negroes and that they are at the center of current drama in Africa. . . . Négritude is a vague and ineffective ideology. There is no place in Africa for a literature that lies outside of revolutionary combat. Négritude is dead."⁴² Much of the audience interjected with applause throughout his presentation.⁴³ Indeed, the Pan-African Festival became one of the first large-scale public forums at which Négritude was harshly criticized by a wide range of African intellectuals and activists. Many of the festival's speakers chose to address what they saw as an ideology that had outlived its utility. This fundamental shift in ideas about the role of culture in social movements that emerged center stage at the Algiers Cultural Festival "marked a political and generational break."⁴⁴ No longer were words alone enough, they had to be tied to concrete action and had to speak to the pressing social and political issues of the day.

One of the more popular attractions at the festival was the "Afro-American Center," located in the heart of downtown Algiers on Rue Didouche Mourad. Housed in a building lent to the Black Panther Party by the Algerian government, this Center was a direct bridge between the freedom struggle in the United States and the young Algerian crowds that flocked to visit it. Black Panther Party (BPP) Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver, who had announced his presence in

Algiers at a press conference at the opening of the festival after more than eight months in hiding in Cuba, also decided to establish the first and only international chapter of the BPP in Algeria.⁴⁵ There in Algeria with Eldridge was his wife, BPP Communications Secretary Kathleen Cleaver, as well as Minister of Culture Emory Douglas and Chief of Staff David Hilliard. After accompanying Kathleen to Algeria to meet Eldridge after months of separation, Emory Douglas returned to California to gather as many materials as possible to have on hand at the Afro-American Center. When finally set up, the Center was totally covered with photographs of Black Panther members, as well as the captivating artwork of Douglas. Aided by their French-speaking comrade Julia Hervé (Wright), daughter of African American novelist Richard Wright, the Center hosted informational lectures and discussions, and handed out plenty of Party material and memorabilia. Emory Douglas recalled:

We had all of these materials that people wanted to see... We would just give them posters, newspapers, all of that. We were just giving all of that away... [And the response] was just overwhelming. People from all over the world were there... I would hand them literature. All on the streets of Algeria we would hand out posters and they were grabbing them and stuff like that.⁴⁶

The Black Panther Party was so well received in Algeria that the government eventually accorded it official status as a liberation movement and provided support similar to that which it provided for other revolutionary movements from around the world, such as FRELIMO of Mozambique and the South African ANC.⁴⁷

Although the prevailing mood at the festival was one of optimism and excitement, there were a number of attendees who felt either cynical toward the festival's purported aims or who were dissatisfied with the way it was managed. Joseph Okpaku, a Nigerian playwright and university professor, was one of these people. Writing in *Africa Report*, he explained, "After several days of sitting in plenary sessions at the Pan-African Cultural Festival at Algiers, I wondered whether I was in the right place or had... strayed into an international cocktail party."⁴⁸ He went on,

Art is not diplomacy and the artist is not a diplomat. The very nature of the festival demands that the politicians, after organizing it, disappear through the back door as soon as the guests arrive. Instead, the artists stayed in the galleries and were forced to listen to politicians officiating at the ritual of cultural diplomacy.⁴⁹

Okpaku concluded that the "festival failed to discuss how culture can progress in the midst of political turmoil" and "failed to make a clear distinction between a government's minister of culture and the guardians and bearers of culture."⁵⁰

Despite such criticism, the festival was also the site for important moments that embodied the sort of ideas and ideals around which the Festival was staged. In one of two documentaries that American expatriate filmmaker William Klein shot while at the festival, titled *Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther* (1970), Cleaver expresses

rather succinctly what a gathering such as the festival meant for him and the Black Panthers:

When I left the United States, I had no idea that I would end up in Algeria, but I think that I was very fortunate coming to Algeria at the time of the festival and to receive an invitation to participate in the festival, to have the opportunity to establish the Afro-American Center which we opened for the festival, which gave us an opportunity to make ourselves known to the other liberation movements who were brought together by the festival. The stage was set. People came here specifically to check each other out, to see what was going on, and to get some idea as to which movements they could relate to.⁵¹

At another moment in the film, for which Klein "organized a meeting between Black Panthers and African revolutionary movement leaders at a restaurant,"⁵² a representative of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) articulates rather remarkably the degree to which there was understood to be a common struggle between African Americans and Africans. The Zimbabwean freedom fighter declared:

We are following the struggle of our Afro-American brothers in the United States and I am sure they are also following our struggles. The people of Zimbabwe have taken up arms and we are facing a common enemy, and it is this common enemy which we must all crush. If our Afro-American brothers score success in the United States, that success is not only theirs, it is ours too.⁵³

***"Algiers Was the Black World Coming of Age...":
The Significance and Legacy of the Festival***

*It is evident that since its staging in July 1969 in Algiers, the First Pan-African Cultural Festival has not yet, on the one hand, been the subject of as much interest as it would normally merit, and on the other, been subjected to critical and profound analysis. Outside of promotional articles, brief informational articles, or violent verbal responses, no sort of collective or individual position has been taken on the continental or international implications of the Festival or even the problems that were debated there.*⁵⁴

—*Souffles: Revue Culturelle Arabe Du Maghreb*
(*Souffles: Arab Cultural Review of the Maghreb*)

The above excerpt from a 1970 editorial in the North African journal *Souffles* captured quite strikingly the dearth of critical reflections on the Pan-African Festival, not only in its immediate aftermath, but also in the decades since. And yet, there is little question that the festival represents a watershed in the history of linkages between the African American and African freedom movements, and serves as an important window onto the cultural politics of the era. It occurred at the height of the Black Power Movement, whose proponents closely identified with the African liberation movements and wrestled with ideas about the role of culture in the global struggles for freedom. At the same time, African nations (three-fourths of whom

had won their independence) were preoccupied with building stability and autonomy, while also often closely following the developments in African Americans' own valiant struggle for full human rights. The First Pan-African Cultural Festival gave voice to these realities and provided the context for important transnational political linkages to be forged. Rarely, if ever, had there been such a broad range of African, African American, and Afro-diasporic artists and activists in conversation over the future direction of their common struggle for justice.

Personal reflections from attendees of the festival help shed considerable light on its significance and legacy. Having traveled to Algeria, experienced the festival, and been transformed by it, their ruminations on the moment's meaning bring the event to life and provide great insight into the unique impact that it had on all who were present. South African poet Dennis Brutus was in London, England, when he first heard news of the impending festival. He wrote to the Algerian government telling them he was very interested in the event and subsequently received an official invitation. When asked to reflect on the festival, despite mentioning the elation the moment evoked, Brutus recalled being struck by the degree to which the Algeria he had come to know through hearing of the courageous struggle for independence, was in fact very much in crisis even only seven years after its triumph:

We had this great festival. But, I had a sense that the resistance movement in Algeria, which had been very important for the whole continent—it inspired people from all over the continent—I had a sense that in the society, already there was beginning to develop a division between your middle-class, really affluent Algerians, and the people in the Casbah. So, you had the people who had fought in the resistance, and they were tough, but they were still having a hard time... When I went into the Casbah, you know, I had that sense of on the one hand you have an elite and on the other hand, people are struggling. So, although Algeria was important for South Africa [since] many South Africans in the resistance trained with the Algerian army... one had the sense that, while there had been a struggle, the struggle was not yet over. And, in fact, the French were returning [to Algeria] because their need for Algerian oil, you know. Even while they were hating the Algerians, they still wanted the Algerian oil and you had this conflict developing as a division in this society.⁵⁵

Michele Russell, who traveled from Washington, DC, to attend the festival, was also struck by the apparent failures of the Algerian revolution and the fact that the nation did not quite live up to the image she held of it. However, she left the festival while it was still at its "height," allowing her to carry with her a sense of admiration for her ancestral continental homeland, just as her experience there was a rite of passage that, as she described it, "was helping me return to myself":

We had seen the film 'Battle of Algiers' in the States. Now, wandering the city, each street came upon us with the shock of a double exposure. Neon signs became the flames of bombed cafes. Women in veils became saboteurs. Taxi drivers, the incarnation of dedicated cadres careening around corners to

unknown rendezvous... Now, seven years after victory, the liberation struggle has just begun. It goes on in their faces. In almost imperceptible hesitation when they are addressed in Arabic and respond in French. Now, seven years later. The resistance. . . .

I left Algeria at the height of the festival. I left her at the point where I would have the most to come back to. And I felt I would come back, if not this land, then to some other part of the Continent that was helping me to return to myself as well. I left for home. I left at the moment I knew that wherever I was I would be, forever, home.⁵⁶

For Barbara Chase-Riboud, the world-renowned African American novelist and sculptor, the festival represented an artistic breakthrough, for although she was not exhibiting any of her own work there, she had something of an epiphany while amidst the festivities. She explained the specific developments in her artwork that grew directly out of her experiences in Algiers:

[The Festival] was wonderful. It was stupendous. And, at that time, I made a big change in my own work, in my own sculpture . . . I had been, sort of, in a kind of surrealistic mood, with elongated figures and so on. But, they had been getting more and more abstract and I couldn't figure out away to get them off the legs and off the pedestal. And suddenly, like a light bulb over my head—and it was in Algiers—I realized that all I had to do was to make them into objects that could be moved by something. And, that something turned out to be silk. That's when I began to do those Malcolm X [sculptures].⁵⁷

Chase-Riboud's famous series of sculptures in memory of Malcolm X were indelibly shaped by the addition of silk to her artistic repertoire, an idea inspired by her experiences at the festival.

Henri Lopes, the celebrated Congolese novelist, also attaches artistic significance to the Pan-African Festival. Prior to the festival, he had only published a couple of poems, but not long afterward, he began publishing what would become prize-winning novels. He recounted:

The importance that the Festival had for me, personally, was that after my presentation [at the symposium], a lot of people began thinking of me as a writer. Oh, I had barely written. I had published a few poems in the journal *Présence Africaine*, but no novels. And, I had the impression of being—how does one say it?—an 'impostor' with that title [of 'writer']. And, when I returned home, that's when I began writing my first work, my collection of short stories, *Tribaliques*. That was after Algiers. I did two things: I quit smoking and I wrote my first book.⁵⁸

For another writer, Don Lee (now known as Haki Madhubhuti), the festival held a very different meaning. A Black Arts Movement poet and publisher, Madhubhuti was struck by the sights and sounds of the historic gathering, but his experiences there

only made him more aware of the work that had yet to be done in Black communities in the United States. He recalled:

The level of conversation, the level of dialogue, and the level of interaction was very political, highly charged, and most certainly, our conversations were struggle-driven. And, the level of dialogue was very intellectually stimulating, primarily because everybody was reading the same books... But, this is a very difficult time because COINTELPRO is coming on strong, the red squads in Chicago, and the Panthers had been driven all out of the country, I mean, Algiers, as well as Cuba and so forth... I mean, I knew Kwame Ture [i.e. Stokely Carmichael] and Eldridge Cleaver and people like that. So, to go and see them in other spaces and being received royally, was very good. But, also, it just spoke to me loudly that the work that we needed to do here [in the U.S.] was just not being done, because if we were doing the proper work here they wouldn't have to leave, they would have protection. And so, it just... to my heart, it said, 'Go back to Chicago, go back to the States, and just move the work up another volume.' And, for me, the volume was, essentially, developing independent Black institutions.⁵⁹

Lastly, for Hoyt Fuller, an African American educator and editor of *Negro Digest* (later renamed *Black World*) who had traveled widely on the African continent, the First Pan-African Cultural Festival of 1969 represented the realization of a long-standing pan-Africanist ideal, bringing with it new possibilities and new challenges:

Pan-Africanism is an idea whose time has come. That fact is, for me, the central meaning of Algiers 1969... That was what it meant to me to have Africans from all over the world assembling on the soil of Frantz Fanon's adopted country to consider the direction the peoples of the African continent should take. Houari Boumedienne, host to the First Pan-African Cultural Festival, said that the nature of the problems affecting the African continent, and the choice of solutions to meet those problems, necessitates a maximum of organization and preparation and a high level of consultation and coordination regarding the decisions and the initiative needed to reach a common goal: the final liberation of Africa, the achievement of economic independence and the hastening of development to bring happiness and prosperity to people of Africa. The singing and dancing in the streets, the pageants and the parades, were more than mere spectacle and entertainment: the festivities were designed to illustrate that for Africa (in Boumedienne's own words) 'culture is a weapon in our struggle for liberation'... Algiers was the Black World coming of Age.⁶⁰

To ensure that the festival would have a lasting impact, a manifesto was drawn up that summarized the event's proceedings and included 40 recommendations for "the dynamic utilisation of the elements of African culture."⁶¹ The recommendations were many, and their practical application varied in quality and kind. One successful example was the creation of a continent-wide collective of filmmakers who called themselves FEPACI, the *Fédération Panafricaine de Cinéastes* [Pan-African

Federation of Filmmakers]. This group, which still exists today, committed themselves "to the notion of Pan-Africanism . . . and believed their prophetic mission was to unite and to use film as a tool for the liberation of the colonized countries and as a step toward the total unity of Africa."⁶² Their work supporting the development of African cinema over the past 40 years has been invaluable.

These kinds of traces of the impact of the 1969 Algiers Festival are a testament to the deep commitment of that era's artists and activists. At the time of the festival itself, in both Africa and African America, the issue of what role culture was to play in the freedom struggles was often under debate. However, despite disagreements over whether its role was to take form in Senghorian *Négritude*, Fanon's "literature of combat," the Black Panthers' revolutionary art, or Maulana Karenga and the US Organization's cultural nationalism, culture nonetheless remained central to the notion of liberation. The First Pan-African Cultural Festival of 1969 was an event that both symbolized and helped invigorate the transnational connections between the many African and African American activists gathered there, just as it served as a site for the vigorous debates of the 1960s and 1970s around the question of the relationship between culture and politics.

Notes

1. Transcription taken from footage of the Festival in William Klein's documentary film, *Festival Panafricain d'Alger* (ONCIC—Office National du Commerce et de l'Industrie Cinématographiques, 1970), as well as from the sound recording, Archie Shepp, *Live at the Panafrican Festival* (BYG-Actuel 529351, 1969).
2. The Tuareg are one of many ethnic groups that comprise the Imazighen (or Berbers), the indigenous peoples of North Africa.
3. Archie Shepp, *Live at the Panafrican Festival* (BYG-Actuel 529351, 1969).
4. "Deux Jazzmen Nous Parlent de la Musique (Archie Shepp et Grachan Moncur)," *El Moudjahid* (Dim. 3—Lun. 4 Aout 1969): 5.
5. Boutkhil Alla, "Festival Culturel Panafricain," *Jeune Afrique*, no. 444 (July 7–13, 1969): 58.
6. Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement," *Drama Review* 12, no. 4 (Summer 1968): 29.
7. William Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965–1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 189.
8. Ibid.
9. For a discussion of some of these tensions, see: Philip G. Altbach and Salah M. Hassan, eds., *The Muse of Modernity: Essays on Culture as Development in Africa* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1996); Dominic Thomas, *Nation-Building, Propaganda, and Literature in Francophone Africa* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002).
10. Sékou Touré, "The Political Leader as the Representative of a Culture," (address to the second Congress of Black Writers and Artists, Rome, 1959). Quoted in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 206.
11. Quoted in Henri Lopes, "Negritude: A Sober Analysis," in *New African Literature and the Arts Vol. III*, ed. Joseph Okpaku (New York: The Third Press, 1973), 82.
12. "National Liberation and Culture," in *Return To The Source: Selected Speeches by Amílcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press with Africa Information Service, 1973), 41.
13. Larry Neal, "The Black Writer's Role," *Liberator* (June 1966): 8.

14. Larry Neal, "Any Day Now: Black Art and Black Liberation," *Ebony* xxiv, no. 10 (August 1969): 54.
15. Neal, "The Black Writer's Role," 8.
16. See: Samir Meghelli, "From Harlem to Algiers: Transnational Solidarities between the African American Freedom Movement and Algeria, 1962–1978," in *Black Routes to Islam*, ed. Manning Marable and Hishaam Aidi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 99–119; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956–1974* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Robyn Spencer, "Merely One Link in the Worldwide Revolution: Internationalism, State Repression, and the Black Panther Party, 1966–1972," in *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution*, ed. Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 215–231; Fanon Che Wilkins, "'In the Belly of the Beast': Black Power, Anti-Imperialism, and the African Liberation Solidarity Movement, 1968–1975" (PhD diss., New York University, 2001); Fanon Che Wilkins, "The Making of Black Internationalists: SNCC and Africa before the Launching of Black Power," *Journal of African American History* 94, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 468–491; and Besenia Rodriguez, "Beyond Nation: The Formation of a Tricontinental Discourse," (PhD diss., Yale University, 2006), among others.
17. René Lemarchand, "The C.I.A. in Africa: How Central? How Intelligent?" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, no. 3 (1976): 401–426; Ellen Ray, William Schaap, Karl van Meter, and Louis Wolf, eds. *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa* (London: Zed Press, 1980).
18. See: Mercer Cook, "The Race Problem in Paris and the French West Indies," *Journal of Negro Education* 8, no. 4 (October 1939): 673–680; F. Abiola Irele, "The Harlem Renaissance and the Negritude Movement," in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature* eds. F. Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 759–784; Tracy Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); and Brent Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), among others.
19. Larry Neal, "Sterling Brown and the Erection of a Whole Literary Tradition," in *Sterling A. Brown: A Umum Tribute* (Philadelphia, PA: Black History Museum Publishers, 1982).
20. Neal, "The Black Arts Movement," 39.
21. *Ibid.*, 31–32.
22. Nathan Hare, "Algiers 1969: A Report on the Pan-African Cultural Festival." *Black Scholar* 1, no. 1 (November 1969): 3.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Neal, "The Black Writer's Role," 7.
25. See: Neil Sheehan, "5 New Groups Tied to C.I.A. Conduits," *New York Times*, February 17, 1967, 1, 16; John M. Crewdson, "C.I.A. Link to Cherne Unit Is Denied," *New York Times*, February 21, 1976, 11; John M. Crewdson, "Worldwide Propaganda Network Built by the C.I.A.," *New York Times*, December 26, 1977, 1, 37; Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 197–224.

26. William Keorapetse Kgositsile, "Paths to the Future," *Negro Digest* xvii, no. 11–12 (September–October 1968): 40.
27. Abdias Do Nascimento, "An Open Letter to the 1st World Festival of Negro Arts," *Présence Africaine* 58, no. 30 (1966): 208–218.
28. Nathan Hare, "Algiers 1969: A Report on the Pan-African Cultural Festival." *Black Scholar* 1, no. 1 (November 1969): 3.
29. *All-African Cultural Festival Handbook*. (Algiers, Algeria: Organization of African Unity General Secretariat, 1969), 1.
30. Ibid. There were also follow-up resolutions at subsequent assemblies; for these, see: "Organization of African Unity Conference," *International Relations* (not dated), in *Documents, Papers & Memoranda on the Growth of the Pan-African Movement Since 1952* ed. Colin Legum, (Todmarden, England: Altair Publishing, 1993), Microfilm.
31. "La Presse Africaine et Le Festival," in *Alger 1969: Bulletin d'Information* 4 (15 Mai 1969), 40–43.
32. Ibid., 42. Translated from the French.
33. Kenneth C. Landry, "Algerian Festival to Spotlight Africa's Vast Cultural Heritage," *Muhammad Speaks*, July 13, 1969, 31.
34. Copy of original in author's possession.
35. Michele Russell, "Algerian Journey," *Freedomways* (4th quarter 1969), 355.
36. Dave Burrell, interview by James G. Spady, date unknown, Philadelphia, PA. Tape recording in possession of James G Spady.
37. Henri Lopes, interview by author, June 13, 2003, Paris, France. Translated from the French by the author.
38. Boutkhil Alla, "Festival Culturel Panafricain," *Jeune Afrique* no. 444 (July 7–13, 1969): 58.
39. Boumedienne, "The Algerian Festival: Inaugural Address," 1.
40. Ibid., 9.
41. Nourreddine Hocine, "Le Coeur d'Alger Bat Au Rythme Du Festival," *El Moudjahid* (Vendredi 18 Juillet 1969), 5.
42. Transcribed from speech shown in the film: William Klein, *Festival Culturel Panafricain d'Alger*, produced by ONCIC (Algerian National Film Board), 1970. Color, 35mm (from 16mm).
43. Ibid.
44. Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris: The African Writers' Landscape* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 73.
45. For more on the International Section of the Black Panther Party: Kathleen Cleaver, "Back to Africa: The Evolution of the International Section of the Black Panther Party (1969–1972)," in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 211–254. See also: Meghelli, "From Harlem to Algiers."
46. Emory Douglas, interview by James G. Spady, November 10, 2007, Philadelphia, PA. Tape recording in possession of James G. Spady.
47. Sanche de Gramont, "Our Other Man in Algiers," *New York Times Magazine*, November 1, 1970.
48. Joseph Okpaku, "Artists and Politicians, Algiers: The Wrestling Match that Never Took Place," *Africa Report* (November 1969): 41.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. *Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther*, directed and filmed by William Klein; produced by ONCIC (Algerian National Film Board), 1970. Color, 35mm (from 16mm), 75 minutes.

52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. "Le Festival Culturel Panafricain D'Alger 1969," *Souffles* (4e trimestre 1969/Janvier-février 1970).
55. Dennis Brutus, interview by author, February 14, 2004, Philadelphia, PA.
56. Michele Russell, "Algerian Journey," *Freedomways* (4th quarter, 1969), 355–364.
57. Barbara Chase-Riboud, interview by James G. Spady, November 14, 2003, Philadelphia, PA. Tape recording in possession of James G. Spady.
58. Henri Lopes, interview by author, June 13, 2003, Paris, France.
59. Haki Madhubuti, interview by author, February 14, 2004, Philadelphia, PA.
60. Hoyt Fuller, *Journey to Africa* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1971), 94–95.
61. "Pan-African Cultural Manifesto" (Organization of African Unity: First All African Cultural Festival, Algiers, Algeria, July/August 1969).
62. Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics & Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 39.

CHAPTER 11

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, But It Will Be Recorded: Soul, Funk, and the Black Urban Experience, 1968–1979

Francesca D'Amico

On the early evening of April 4, 1968, at the intersection of College Street and McLemore Avenue in South Memphis, the architects of the Southern Soul sound were conducting a session in Studio A of Stax Records. Three miles away, at the Lorraine Motel, Sam & Dave's baritone player waited for Isaac Hayes, then one-half of the in-house songwriting-duo Hayes-Porter, to drive him to the studio. When Hayes's wife indicated that she needed the family car, Hayes told the baritone player that they would take separate taxis to the studio. It was during that ride that Hayes heard of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Devastated, Hayes arrived at the session unaware of the degree to which King's death would change his consciousness as an artist and an African American.¹ As riots broke out across Memphis, Stax co-owner Estelle Axton confessed that staff feared for the safety of the studio because of its reputation as a white-owned label. Anticipating that the building would be burned or vandalized, Axton's brother and Stax co-owner Jim Stewart recruited two other staff members to help move studio recordings offsite as a preventative measure.²

Nineteen months later, as racial tensions continued to mount in Memphis, over at Stax Records the consciousness aroused by King's death continued to bring about permanent and disruptive changes. Despite attempts to recreate color-blind bonds, the family-like atmosphere that had long encouraged a collegial exchange had disappeared. While Stewart did not explicitly label this wedge racial in nature, he argued that working relationships came to be tainted by suspicion and withdrawal. The assassination had heightened racial sensitivity and consciousness, especially as white label-mates were routinely hassled outside the studio by local African American

gang-related pressure. Creatively, musicians such as Isaac Hayes cited being artistically paralyzed for an entire year with bitterness and anger over American race relations and the assassination of one of black America's foremost civil rights leaders. Hayes noted that by the turn of the 1970s, he would become re-inspired, energetically constructing his artistry as a vehicle for activism, consciousness, and resistance.³

King's assassination catalyzed black radical sentiments that had been brewing for some time, sentiments that were quickly mirrored in popular music. The first of these musical reactions to King's death came on April 7 when Nina Simone performed a 15-minute version of her newly written piece, "Why? (The King of Love Is Dead) (1968)" at a Long Island music festival.⁴ While the music would not officially be termed "Soul" until *Billboard Magazine* renamed its Rhythm and Blues chart in 1969, the mainstream media began to use the term in the wake of 1960s' urban riots and the changing tide of civil rights practice and rhetoric to signify the growing militancy of the black community.⁵ Within the macrocosm of American social, political, and economic realities, 1968 was a transitional moment in which the Soul/Funk tradition powerfully borrowed from the political context in order to lay the groundwork for cultural transformation. An increasing number of Soul and Funk recordings began to reflect an awareness of, and explicit engagement with, the changing tone of the civil rights struggle, producing a far more explicit, critical, and pessimistic body of musical commentary. This phenomenon, induced in part by King's death, as well as the perceived failure of political leaders and activists to generate any significant changes in the quality of urban black life, led to a notable shift in the content of black urban music over the course of the late 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, while the mainstream had imagined a tenuous relationship between Soul/Funk music and black radical politics, this partnership was instead genuine and complex.

Between 1968 and 1979, a new tradition, one I have labeled the *Politico-Soul/Funk* idiom, enabled a set of black artists to expand the black liberation movement's "political" thrust by contributing to the dialogue through conscious lyricism and instrumentation. While a substantive amount of Soul & Funk material focused on love and sexuality, *Politico-Soul/Funk* made it a practice to elevate American consciousness by highlighting American social, political, and economic realities, especially on issues particular to the urban African American community. Embodying the role of observer and commentator, *Politico-Soul/Funk* artists often demonstrated that African Americans continued to contend with gradual change, non-solutions, and power structures meant to disarm blacks, especially the poor, of their rights through the use of musical techniques, lyrical content, and a general aesthetic that included dress, coiffure, gait, and language. Consequently, subject matter often included the exploration of systemic issues such as an uneven dispersal of power, equity, underemployment, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and a crisis in organized religion, as well as broader inclinations toward activism on the grounds of racial pride and ties to the Third World. While *Politico-Soul/Funk* artists were not ideologues, they were certainly aware, in varying degrees, of the ideological philosophies informing activist circles. Through a close textual reading and analysis, this chapter will demonstrate that *Politico-Soul/Funk* lyrics closely resembled, and

in some instances were directly inspired by, two particular strains of Black Power ideology: the Pluralist and Nationalist philosophies.

That said, while many *Politico-Soul/Funk* artists engaged in the dialogue, they did not always perform in this subgenre on a regular basis, engage equally, react similarly, or articulate consistent ideologies between and even within single albums. Rather, for some artists, a number of their recordings often did not fit this “consciousness raising” categorization, and were instead straightforward initiatives to popularize pleasurable music and achieve chart success. However, there were those whose body of work predominantly found a home in the *Politico-Soul/Funk* idiom. Therefore, it is important to recognize that the relationship between the new socio-political reality and the emergence of this subgenre is not simplistically direct and causal. Rather, any one-to-one presentation of *Politico-Soul/Funk* as an outgrowth of Civil Rights declension and the intensification of black radicalism is unrepresentative in that it does not account for the complex, uneven, and contradictory ways artists produced the message music of the period.

In order to explore the nature of the *Politico-Soul/Funk* response to the black urban experience, this chapter examines a total of 1,123 recordings across 126 live and studio albums through textual analysis of transcribed lyrics and the use of a database that is both chronologically and thematically divided.⁶ This chapter will focus on all the solo albums released by the following ten artists between January 1968 and December 1979: Curtis Mayfield, Donny Hathaway, Gil Scott-Heron, Isaac Hayes, James Brown, Marvin Gaye, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, Sly & the Family Stone, and Stevie Wonder. In this 11-year period, each of these artists achieved significant mainstream notoriety in the way of chart success, album sales, and popular culture visibility, and it is for this reason that they were chosen for inclusion in this chapter. With the help of the scholarship of political theorist John T. McCartney, who has charted and categorized Black Power ideology, and the work of Black Power historians, cultural studies scholars, and musicologists, it has become possible to systematically trace the fluid manifestations and broader meaning of Black Power and popular music’s relationship to black liberation. While the database has helped determine broad trends across the historical period and within the work of singular artists, a close textual analysis of singular recordings has permitted the discovery of an intellectual relationship between black radical thought and a set of *Politico-Soul/Funk* artists who often chose to embrace and incorporate common Black Power keywords, popular slogan phrases, concepts, and theories articulated by Black Power activists and organizations in the body of their work. In each case, lyrics were textually analyzed for their explicit references to Black Power ideology, rather than the coded references they possibly contained, in order to minimize error of interpretation.⁷

Unlike the late 1960s, early Soul expression differed considerably in the nature of its lyricism. While early Soul served mainstream consumption as well as the sensibilities of a broad range of political ideologies incorporated within the rubric of the Civil Rights Movement, the instances in which popular artists created explicit political narratives were few by comparison. Interestingly, given Soul music’s firm rooting in the black church tradition, it is not a surprise that many of the early politicized Soul recordings tended toward metaphorically contained alternative and subversive

lyrics, rather than explicit documentary-style narratives. For example, prior to 1968, Curtis Mayfield often favored coding his lyrical messages in beatific gospel imagery and rich allegory over simple documentary-style narratives. Consequently, few of his early lyrics, unlike the music he would produce in the 1970s, made explicit mention of race or the black liberation movement. Instead, his lyrics symbolically referenced the support of acts of protest and persuasion and nonviolent intervention. His post-1968 shift was in part a consequence of an increase in race consciousness as well as his choice to leave ABC-Paramount to establish his independent label Curtom Records.⁸

In other cases, however, as is true of many Motown artists including Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder, musicians had been encouraged to distance themselves from the black liberation movement. While Motown, a black-owned and commercially successful record label, paralleled the significance of integration for many African Americans during the early Civil Rights Movement, much of the material Motown produced was generally lyrically apolitical. By the late 1960s, Motown, like mainstream Civil Rights leadership, was increasingly criticized for its inability to adequately address the totality of African American life. In many ways, this was generally true of early Soul music in that it did not explicitly tackle the populist concerns of a largely black, urban-based working class. Ironically, by the 1970s, many artists at Motown began to directly engage with the urban black and working-class politics of the period as a direct consequence of Berry Gordy's decision in 1972 to abandon his working-class constituency in Detroit and re-locate to Los Angeles's highly competitive culture industry. Gordy's decision, along with his prioritization of film and television projects over music and the loosening of the label's music production rules, meant that many Motown artists were able to write and produce more of their lyrical, musical, and thematic content, in some cases free of Gordy's autocratic control, albeit with instances of occasional debate and protest.⁹ That said, though Motown had long been cautious about identifying too strongly with black liberation, it had not ignored the rising tide of racial consciousness completely. As early as 1963, Motown had recorded a number of speeches on its spoken word label Black Forum including: Stokely Carmichael's "Free Huey" speech (1968), and Martin Luther King's "The Great March to Freedom" (1963), and "Why I Oppose War in Vietnam" (1967) speeches.¹⁰

Beginning in the late 1960s however, era-specific developments in relation to black public life and space enabled Black popular music to become a powerful aural conduit of public social space for the expression of the dominant themes of black struggle. Among the themes newly and/or prominently expressed were racial pride, self-reliance, self-defense, Pan-Africanism, internationalism by way of Third World solidarity, and debates over the perceived failures of the direct action, nonviolent movement. According to Cultural Studies scholar Mark Anthony Neal, black popular music has always been a part of a larger project of political and cultural resistance to maintain the very communities of resistance that have produced a black discourse of protest. By the late 1960s, given a shift in the popular consciousness from a tone of nonviolence to militancy, the messages of African American artists, those who had been politically involved, politically disengaged, and/or lyrically careful, began to reflect a new political terrain of a broadly interpreted set of populist concerns of

a largely black, urban-based working class. Neal claims that parallel to this change was the massive erosion of black public life as a consequence of random violence, a heightened military presence, a general decline in the safety and stability of African American public institutions, and the subsequent demise of accessible social spaces; forums that in many regards had shaped and defined the black popular music tradition. Neal claims that the shift in tone of Soul and Funk music by the late 1960s marked an attempt by many African American artists to aurally reconstruct these social spaces via recordings, particularly “live” recordings, in order to electronically document the black popular music tradition in its intended context, while providing artists with the ability to maintain aesthetic credibility within an increasingly inaccessible public constituency.¹¹

By the latter 1960s and much of the 1970s, the social, political, and economic climate presented *Politico-Soul/Funk* artists with a historical moment of transition marked by confusion and frustration. With the decline of big industry and the economy entering a period of stagflation, inflation reached unprecedented heights, unemployment swelled, welfare rolls mushroomed, and single-headed households multiplied almost exponentially. Even as some marginalized Americans (African Americans and women specifically) made tremendous gains in economic status, educational achievement, and social mobility, the 1970s found millions of Americans, especially those located in the inner cities, even more entrenched in the vicious cycle of poverty. Politically, the 1970s marked sharp domestic reactions to continued American participation in the Vietnam War, the intensification of radical activist responses, and a realignment of American politics away from liberalism with the resurgence of conservatism and the election of Republican nominee Richard Nixon. By the end of the decade, it appeared as though America faced permanent economic stagnation, the presence of a supposed “underclass” that challenged the spirit of the American dream, and a hostile “culture war” between those who defended personal liberation and those who reinforced the evangelical zeal of the New Right.¹²

In the aftermath of Dr. Martin Luther King’s assassination, black radicals intensified their response to this historical moment with a call to unify on the grounds of a distinct in-group community consciousness. By the latter 1960s, Black Power pluralists¹³ and nationalists,¹⁴ each representative of a subset of Black Power ideology, understood that in order to attain a greater share of American social, political, and economic decision-making power, African Americans needed to have a thorough understanding of group identity and the power-oriented nature of American institutional life. While both emphasized in-group solidarity, pluralists advocated for amicable coalition politics alongside competing ethnic and racialized groups, while nationalists were largely uninterested in integrated efforts and insisted on black self-determination on issues of economic and political freedom. Within the umbrella of nationalism were three ideological subcategories: counter-communalism, cultural nationalism, and separatism, each with their own distinct perspective on the nationalist philosophy.

In the vanguard of this *Politico-Soul/Funk* tradition stood the “Godfather of Soul,” James Brown, who promoted in-group sentiments that appealed to both the pluralist and nationalist philosophies. Through the lyrical use of signifying practice,¹⁵ Brown’s music prominently communicated a set of lyrics composed of

a veritable lexicon of distinctive and coded vernacular limited to the in-group cachet of the African American community. The use of this formulaic signifying, since termed "Soul Talk," often took the form of slogan phrases such as "I got soul," "Brothers and Sisters," and "I need some Soul Power." These slogan lyrics were often used in order to strengthen the sense of an African American bloc and affirm a system of alternative values and an essence of black distinctiveness.¹⁶ Many of Brown's "Soul Talk" anthems articulated the basic pluralist belief that African Americans needed to mobilize into an effective bloc in order to stress collective success and attain greater access to economic and political power. Like nationalists, Brown's anthems also encouraged African Americans to develop and strengthen a sense of in-group consciousness that would serve them well in their struggle for power. By reusing and recombining stock phrases uttered throughout American ghettos, Brown established a rapport with African American audiences and a shared linguistic and experiential understanding that was closely associated with the experiences of urban black America.¹⁷ According to journalist Robert Shelton, by the latter 1960s, Brown was not simply a soul singer and dancer, but a black leader who had become deeply immersed in his role as a spokesman, a militant, and a peacemaker.¹⁸

In 1968, in one of his most famous *Politico-Soul/Funk* utterances, Brown employed slogan phrase lyricism in order to explicitly tackle equity and in-group consciousness in his "Say It Loud (I'm Black, and I'm Proud)" recording. Charting for 12 weeks, Brown's "Say It Loud" was a number 1 single for six weeks on the Rhythm & Blues chart and peaked in the tenth position on the Pop chart.¹⁹ "Say It Loud" was notable in that it highlighted a steadfast acceptance of brazen black pride and openly criticized those who argued that African Americans had no right to demand the equality to which they were rightly entitled. In the recording, Brown highlighted feelings of growing frustration with unfulfilled Civil Rights goals when he sang, "... we won't quit moving until we get what we deserve. ... we are people too, ... we'd rather die on our feet, than keep livin' on our knees."²⁰

Brown's anthem broadly echoed a number of Black Power tenets, including self-empowerment, black frustration, unity, self-determination, and humanism. Like Black Power activists, the crux of Brown's anthem argued that King's nonviolence philosophy was vulnerable and that it was time that the black community stopped pleading for their humanity. Brown urged the African American community to pursue their battle from a position of empowerment even if it meant that the goal would not be met. Through the use of the pronoun "we," this anthem reinforced the concept of community consciousness, distinctiveness, and pride and stressed the need to form a bloc intent on collective success and the procurement of power as an equity issue.

In live recorded performance contexts, Brown's "Say It Loud" served different purposes according to the audience for which it was performed. For example, following Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, Brown, who was recording in a New York studio at the time, immediately took to radio to call for peace. When he arrived in Boston the next day, Brown agreed to televise his April 5, 1968 concert in Boston's racially divided Roxbury neighborhood (a broadcast that replayed twice

over following the initial showing). Pending a final decision among band members, the mayor's office, the city councilor, and WGBH radio, Brown took the stage in an effort to avert feared riotous behavior.²¹ Brown claimed that though he, "was all for self-defense, it made no sense for [African Americans] to burn down [their] communities."²² Playing to an audience of nearly 15,000 people, Brown employed a number of common Black Power era slogans, including "Brothers and Sisters" and "I need some power—Soul Power," in order to induce unity and provide cathartic relief to those angered by King's assassination. For city authorities, this was a classic hegemonic move to use the status of the #1 Soul Brother to keep the streets quiet; and it was a successful one at that given that there were no reports of any significant unlawful activity that evening.²³

Four months later, Brown performed the same recording in Dallas for a racially integrated audience. Explaining the reasoning behind the production of the song, Brown claimed,

You know, one way of solving a lot of problems that we've got in this country, is letting a person feel they're important, feel they're somebody. And a man can't get himself together until he know [*sic*] who he is, and be proud of what and who he is and where he come [*sic*] from. Now I just recorded a tune called, 'Say It Loud (I'm Black, and I'm Proud).' Now if a man is not proud of who he is and what he come [*sic*] from, he's not a man. So, I want each and everyone to understand that this tune is for the good of what it mean [*sic*] and what it can do for a man's self pride.²⁴

Brown's introductory statements articulated an intention to draw together Americans on the grounds of Black Power's coalition politics of self-love, self-worth, self-actualization, and group consciousness. In this case, Brown appealed to Black Power Pluralism to contend that America's collective race problems would be rectified if all Americans acknowledged the black man as valuable. Tying Brown's introductory interlude to "Say It Loud's" live performance, it becomes clear that Brown intended to stress the concepts of self-love and racial empowerment in relation to a figurative black man. Whether intended or not, Brown's choice to set black pride explicitly within the realm of black masculinity excluded black women and children and reinforced the popular conception that there was a strong identification between black males and Black Power as the heart of black radical liberation.

In later years, Brown claimed that the recording cost him much of his crossover audience and success. Following the song's release, the racial makeup of his concert attendees was largely African American. According to Brown, "The white community took it entirely the wrong way, as a kind of aggressive statement meant to induce fear."²⁵ In response, radio stations dropped Brown from their playlists, he was no longer offered performance spots to play in predominantly white venues and pop festivals, and with limited exceptions, he was offered few if any opportunities to appear in film and television.²⁶ Even prior to the song's release, as early as Brown's decision to integrate his concert audience, Brown's father had articulated worry over the potential popularity fallout of these political decisions and articulations. Brown

however argued that, "It would be a shame to have this big audience, with all that's going on, and not try to do some good." Despite his good intentions, the recording, he claimed, was either misunderstood or rejected. Many white Americans, he contended, thought that the song was militant and angry and that it was advocating "kill the honky [white Americans]," when he was instead simply articulating an idea that was "badly needed at the time," in that it "helped [African] Americans in general and the dark-skinned man in particular" gain a sense of pride.²⁷

Along with mainstream audience and tastemaker resistance, Brown claimed that he also encountered much disdain and pushback from African American activists as well. Prior to the recording's release, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) H. Rap Brown had disdainfully labeled James Brown, "the Roy Wilkins of the music world"; underscoring what H. Rap Brown considered to be James Brown's problematically cautious nature.²⁸ Members of the Black Panther Party (BPP) had also labeled Brown an "Uncle Tom" for befriending white politicians (both democratic and republican), touring Vietnam on behalf of the nation, and for writing patriotic songs such as "America Is My Home (1968)." Brown's colleague Hank Ballard insisted that members of the BPP had visited and threatened Brown, with the use of guns, to produce militant message music.²⁹ The most famous of these stories was from the night Brown recorded "Say It Loud." On this evening, Brown claimed that he had received a knock on his door and when he opened it, there was a deactivated grenade on the floor with the words "James Brown" painted on it; he believed that the package was the work of the BPP.³⁰

Nonetheless, from Brown's anthem sprung a series of recordings that resembled the cultural nationalist strain of Black Power Nationalism. Considered a subcategory of Black Power Nationalism, cultural nationalism intended to reaffirm the beauty and uniqueness of black culture by creating a blueprint for the development of an authentically black value system rooted in African American, and in some instances diasporic virtues, styles, values, and symbols. Grounded in the understanding that African Americans comprised a separate and unique cultural entity that challenged white cultural particularism and racial superiority, cultural nationalists asserted their distinctiveness via clothing, language, hairstyles, and by recounting their unique historical experiences through the literary and performing arts. According to historian William L. Van Deburg, for cultural nationalists, black culture *was* Black Power.³¹

Soul and Funk artists first reinforced a relationship to cultural nationalism through the orchestration of the music. According to ethnomusicologist Portia K. Maultsby, artists employed a set of *Africanisms*³² in order to assert a level of cultural pride that reflected a new set of musical values that intentionally deviated from the white American mainstream's normative practices.³³ Musically, the Soul/Funk tradition was a conscious shift that stressed the hierarchical role of African American idioms, particularly a focus on rhythm, over the mainstream's focus on melody. Fusing the sonic and performative fundamentals of gospel and blues music, Soul reanimated the most politically benign aspects of the post-World War II black church and the dominant social institutions of African American public life by reconnecting their social functions with the populist demands of the black working

class.³⁴ The Soul/Funk tradition first did this by featuring the complex polyrhythmic practice of syncopation.³⁵ Alongside polyrhythmic drumming and brass instrumentation, artists would layer instrumentals with the call-and-response technique³⁶ of repetitive and expressive melismatic³⁷ vocal improvisation, falsettos,³⁸ moans, shouts, grunts, finger snapping, foot stomping, and clapping.³⁹ With the inclusion of Funk into their musical vocabulary, African American artists reinforced the primary role of rhythm by featuring the polyrhythmic “groove” of the electric bass guitar.⁴⁰ According to Paul Gilroy, the conscious effort to pursue a rhythmically centered music represented a core of musical practices that have contributed to the “lived sense of a racial self.”⁴¹ When interviewed about the role of rhythm, Jerome Brailey, drummer for Funkadelic, echoing nationalist rhetoric, solidified this theory when he told journalist Robert Palmer that, “the heavier the rhythm, the heavier the blackness, and the blacker the better.”⁴²

Of the 1,123 recordings surveyed across 126 albums, 3.4 percent (38 recordings) focused on this theme of racial pride and community. Against rhythmically driven instrumentals, these recordings reinforced the theme of “black as beautiful” through lyrical slogans and advocated for an empowered community ethos that asserted African American cultural distinctiveness. Of the 38 recordings, 97 percent (37 titles) of the songs appeared prior to 1975; with the years 1970 and 1971 witnessing the highest number of racial pride statements. Among the recordings were titles such as Gil Scott-Heron’s “Brother (1970),” Curtis Mayfield’s “We The People Who Are Darker Than Blue (1970),” James Brown’s “Soul Power (1971),” Nina Simone’s “Brown Baby (1972),” and Stevie Wonder’s “Black Man (1976).” Of the 10 artists surveyed, those who recorded the greatest number of racial pride statements were Gil Scott-Heron with 12 recordings (32 percent), Curtis Mayfield with 11 recordings (29 percent), and Nina Simone with 7 recordings (18 percent).⁴³

Like “Say it Loud,” Roberta Flack’s 1969 debut album *First Take* typified cultural nationalist consciousness. In her opening track, “Tryin’ Times (1969),” Flack discussed the failure of nonviolence protests and one of the responses to gradualism and nonsolutions in the late 1960s, which commonly came in the form of riots. “Tryin’ Times” demanded that African Americans reexamine their strategies; Flack argued that rioting was not the answer, though peaceful demonstration did not seem to be either.⁴⁴ On the album’s second track, “Angelitos Negros (Black Angels) (1969),” written and sung in Spanish, Flack presented her alternative strategy. Focusing on community, self-love, and mutual respect, Flack described a painter, one from “her land,” who continually painted white angels. In a powerful statement, Flack demanded that the painter depict beautiful black angels, for they are just as good by nature. Flack declared that if the painter claimed to paint with love, then he should not depreciate their color because God loves all regardless of their outwardly appearance. In one of the most powerful questions the recording offers, Flack asked, “if you have a soul, why have you never remembered to paint black angels in all the times you have depicted the things you have deemed beautiful?”⁴⁵ Whether intentionally or not, Flack had incorporated and promoted cultural nationalist themes and, in doing so, called attention to the need to construct “blackness” in an attractive light.

Like Flack, Nina Simone slowly embraced a radicalized liberation politics as her personal philosophies shifted across the course of the 1960s. Simone spent much of the 1960s motivated by the direction of the Civil Rights Movement. She claimed that music and politics overwhelmed her life as she came to recognize that she had no choice but to align herself with activists. In familiarizing herself with the movement, she quickly recognized that she needed to educate herself on Afro-diasporic history and culture.⁴⁶ Under the tutelage of writer-activists Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, and Langston Hughes, Simone reflected on her upbringing in Jim Crow North Carolina and her struggle for acceptance “as a black person in a country run by white people and a woman in a world run by men.” As Simone matured creatively, her music reflected this greater introspection on her personal experiences and the intersection of race and gender.⁴⁷ Simone conceded that she was often asked to act as a spokesperson of the movement; answering political questions in press interviews and fulfilling requests to play benefits and appear in marches. As such, she maintained that she was driven to deeply familiarize herself with the pressing issues, movement initiatives, and organizations, even as she was still determining what kind of revolutionary she wanted to be and how she wished to contribute to the movement. Simone claimed that though she was “not cold and intellectual about campaigning,” she was intuitive and acted out assertively when faced with injustice. By 1967, Simone’s major concern was over whether African Americans would have full access to social, political, and economic American life. She contended that she had become of the mind that, “If America said no, [that] it was [not] going to open the door for us [African Americans], we had to be strong enough to kick it down.”⁴⁸

Two short years later, while playing at the Philharmonic in New York City, Simone’s live performance of “To Be Young, Gifted and Black (1970)” signaled a decision to infuse her commentary of black talent and potential with cultural nationalist inclinations just as Flack had. In her live performance of the recording Simone claimed, “It [the recording ‘Young, Gifted and Black’] [was] not addressed primarily to white people. Though it doesn’t put you [white people] down in any way . . . it simply ignores you. For my people [African Americans] need all the inspiration and love that they can get.” Simone continued to state that throughout the world there were young black men and women who were gifted and not yet aware of their potential. Simone claimed that African American elders must tell their young of their worth, especially in instances of low self-esteem. Speaking from personal experience, Simone claimed that as a young girl she was haunted by her blackness and longed to know the truth about her beauty and uniqueness. Encouraging psychological empowerment, race consciousness, and pride, Simone engaged in an improvisatory call and response section in which she, like African American pastors engage congregations, called upon God to inspire the black community. She declared, “Make us free from exploitation and strife, ‘cause nothing is more precious than that. Take our people by the hand, . . . unify us and don’t divide us no [*sic*] more Lord. Let us learn how to love ourselves first.”⁴⁹

Like Simone and Flack, Curtis Mayfield also became a central figure in the promotion of cultural nationalist messages. On his 1970 album *Curtis*, this new direction was made clear on two particular recordings. The first, “We the People Who

Are Darker than Blue (1970)," began from the premise that African Americans were psychologically disempowered. Encouraging African Americans to unify, respect one another, and know their own history, Mayfield declared that blacks had to admit that while they had come a long way, they should not yet be satisfied.⁵⁰ His second recording, "Miss Black America (1969)," highlighted the newly created pageant, originally a local Philadelphia contest that received national press coverage in 1968 as a protest statement against the Miss America Pageant's exclusion of black contestants.⁵¹ Mayfield's recording opened with a dialogue between father and daughter that was reminiscent of the pageant creator's own memories of conversations with his daughters. In the dialogue, the father asked his daughter what she hoped to be as a young woman and the young girl responded with, "Daddy, I would like to be Miss Black America." Stressing racial pride, cultural distinctiveness, psychological empowerment, and the beauty of blackness, Mayfield's lyrics narrated an elated crowd, donning the "natural" look and looking on as young black female contestants walked the runway proudly. Congratulating the contestants, Mayfield stated, "society salutes you today... Watch over Miss Black America, so beautifully equal. We're so proud of you."⁵²

Implicit in each of these recordings were the themes of self-love, cultural distinctiveness, and communal collectivity. Simone's "Young, Gifted and Black" and Mayfield's "We the People Who Are Darker than Blue" approached these three themes almost exclusively through the lens of race; arguing that blackness primarily informed individual and collective awareness and activism. Flack's "Angelitos Negros" and Mayfield's "Miss Black America" however, each incorporated gender alongside race. In Mayfield's case, his lyrics focused on an all-black beauty pageant as a source of community accomplishment and instance of institutionalized protest. However, while Mayfield used the beauty pageant to reaffirm the magnificence of black women, and by extension the black community, he used gender as a stepping-stone to fulfill the larger project of addressing community consciousness and challenging the persistent imagery of beauty as synonymous with whiteness. Flack however used gender to criticize a figurative black male painter for neglecting black symbols in his definition of "beautiful." In doing so, Flack highlighted the artist's role in misleading his audience as to the collective worth of blackness. Whether Flack directly intended to suggest that this negligence had something explicitly to do with the role of black men in positions of power is unclear. However, it is telling that Flack did not choose a female artist as her subject. In each of these four cases, as historian Waldo E. Martin Jr. argues, the inclination to incorporate cultural nationalist sentiments, whether in relation to race or gender, spoke to the urgent need to affirm blackness, especially black beauty, in an effort to construct what he terms the "Black Power nation," and to provide an antidote to antiblack representations.⁵³

Recorded alongside these cultural nationalist anthems was a second dominant theme: worsening inner city conditions. In the early 1970s, many artists began to turn their energies toward creating a diverse body of reflective, pessimistic, and in some instances even militant commentary on the sociopolitical and socioeconomic issues that plagued urban black communities.⁵⁴ While many black families had experienced gains in income ranges in the 1960s,⁵⁵ by 1969 reductions in poverty rates had slowed and by 1974, poverty rates indicated that 30 percent of African

American incomes fell below the poverty line and two-thirds of black children had not been able to escape poverty in the first ten years of their lives.⁵⁶ Consequently, 1969 through to 1974 witnessed a rise in the number of albums that addressed issues of underemployment, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, corruption, and institutional racism and inequity, signaling an inclination among a number of artists to engage in a conversation with Black Power ideological positions on inner city conditions.

Of the 1,123 recordings surveyed across 126 albums, 16.4 percent (185 titles) focused on the health and welfare of African American inner city communities. Of those recordings, 21.1 percent (39 recordings) depicted national poverty, 18.3 percent (34 recordings) described the effects of drug and alcohol abuse, 15.1 percent (28 recordings) explained crime rates, 10.3 percent (19 recordings) denoted the physical effects of urban decay, 9.2 percent (17 recordings) highlighted the traumas of unemployment, and 26 percent (48 recordings) described how inner city conditions affected the functionality of the family. Of the 185 recordings in this category, 70 percent (129 titles) of the songs appeared prior to 1974, with the years 1970 through to 1971 witnessing the highest number of inner city content. Among the recordings were titles such as Donny Hathaway's "Tryin' Times (1970)," Gil Scott-Heron's "The Get Out of the Ghetto Blues (1972)," Curtis Mayfield's "Pusherman (1972)," James Brown's "King Heroin (1972)," and Stevie Wonder's "Village Ghetto Land (1976)." Of the artists surveyed, those who produced the greatest inner city content were Gil Scott-Heron with 44 recordings (52%), Curtis Mayfield with 31 recordings (17%), and Nina Simone with 25 recordings (14%).⁵⁷

The majority of inner city-focused recordings resembled three particular strains of Black Power ideology: pluralism, black separatism,⁵⁸ and cultural nationalism. In recordings that adopted the pluralist approach, the focus tended to be on coalition politics, collective success, and tackling the issue-oriented politics of poverty and crime. In some cases, black artists were keen to highlight the intersection of race and class in order to rally broad support around issues that affected America's racialized poor. In recordings that adopted the separatist approach however, the focus tended to be on constructing a society that secured equal opportunities for the black community. While separatists had no plans for a total societal transformation, they intended to create conditions in which the black community could create their own destiny and reconstruct society so that all citizens had an equal opportunity to secure material and political power.⁵⁹ In cases where artists adopted the cultural nationalist outlook, the focus tended to be on encouraging individual self-actualization and psychological empowerment in order to succeed despite inner city conditions. Each of these philosophies manifested themselves differently across a series of recordings and even within the work of singular artists.

For James Brown, whose concerns over the inner city drifted between pluralism and nationalism, the release of "I Don't Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing (Open Up the Door I'll Get It Myself) (1969)," highlighted separatist proclivities. Opening the recording, Brown repeatedly uttered the title phrase, suggesting that as a black man, he was uninterested in a handout; he wanted the opportunity to get what he needed for himself. While it might appear as though the recording was addressed only to those Brown understood to be privileged and in power, it was not. The use

of the terms, “our people” and “us,” suggest that the recording was also addressed to Black America. According to Brown, black children in particular needed better schools, books and a curriculum invested in allowing black Americans to read about themselves. For Brown, this was not a pluralist project. Brown was interested in seeing mainstream America relinquish their power and engage in equitable dialogue and exchange. He made this clear when he stated, “Don’t give me integration, give me true communication, I want equal opportunity to live tomorrow.” Through his use of the pronoun “we” and possessive noun “our,” Brown suggested that the black community needed to take power for themselves in order to correct the power imbalance.⁶⁰ Throughout the recording, Brown argued that he was interested in creating the conditions necessary for African Americans to view themselves with human dignity and reconstruct society along desirable lines.

Brown’s “I Don’t Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing (Open Up the Door I’ll Get It Myself) (1969),” a recording he claimed was the follow-up to “(Say It Loud) (1968),” interestingly highlights the contradiction in Brown’s relationship to Black Power ideology. While “(Say It Loud)” was largely a cultural nationalist anthem, “I Don’t Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing” was in many ways an articulation of Black Power separatism. Central to Brown’s vision of Black Power was education and self-actualization through hard work and economic leverage. In his autobiography, Brown contended that the black community had a lot of problems that they needed to solve for themselves.⁶¹ In his recording “I Don’t Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing,” he claimed that, “[he] wanted to let black people know that nobody [*sic*] owed [them] anything for being an [African] American, and [he] wanted to let the white people know that all anybody want[ed] [wa]s a fair chance.” Through metaphor and literal references to inequality he argued, “Don’t have a race and tell me it starts at ten o’clock when it has already started at eight o’clock and expect me to win it. Don’t give me a welfare check; give me a job so I can fare well.”⁶² According to historian Rickey Vincent, for Brown to be a socially conscious entertainer who visited classrooms, cultural centers, poverty centers, and prisons to espouse his cultural nationalist views, while articulating the capitalist ethic of American society, was inherently contradictory. However, to promote notions of property ownership, investment, and community empowerment through black entrepreneurship and collaborations with white capital was actually not at all contradictory in that it fell within the parameters of the rubric of Black Power nationalism. Like other Black Power separatists, Brown advocated for, particularly in songs like “I Don’t Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing,” the reconstruction of American society for equal opportunity with an interest in both the individual and community. Unlike countercommunalists who were interested in abandoning capitalism, Brown reiterated separatist notions of correcting societal imbalances while not entirely advocating for total societal transformation and the overhaul of American capitalism.⁶³

In Donny Hathaway’s case, the inner city was represented as a physical and embodied space and not simply a set of experiences or ethos and sensibility. In his first single, “The Ghetto (1970),” Hathaway built a cinematic aural landscape of black urban space. Across a largely instrumental recording, listeners heard the phrase “the ghetto” along with babies crying, old men talking on a street corner, teenagers discussing the details of a block party, young men asking to pass the marijuana, and

common inner city phrases such as “sho’nuff.” Combining blues, soul, gospel, and jazz idioms with traditional African drumming, Hathaway celebrated the ghetto as a physically separate entity from the mainstream; a site of convergence, kinship, and distinctly black cultural resistance.⁶⁴ Commemorating the ghetto as anything but dysfunctional and pathological, Hathaway’s music helped his core audience, a younger, nouveau black middle class, maintain their communal ties with the institutions of black urban life that they had been physically and emotionally removed from. Using a mixture of diverse musical styles and noncontroversial racial pride to create a mass-market space for black urban nostalgia, Hathaway created a limited engagement with the inner city for his audience without actually experiencing any of its troubling realities.⁶⁵

For Motown’s Marvin Gaye however, an artist who had previously remained politically disengaged, America’s foreign policy and the structural inequities affecting American inner cities were too paralyzing to mute. Over the course of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Gaye had written to his brother Frankie, drafted to fight in Vietnam, about his growing disenchantment with America’s presence in Vietnam, domestic urban riots and police brutality against Kent State student demonstrators.⁶⁶ Gaye claimed that the Kent State murders and stories of Vietnam affected him deeply. He argued, “The murders at Kent State made me sick. I couldn’t sleep, couldn’t stop crying. The notion of singing three-minute songs about the moon and June didn’t interest me . . . [and] when my brother Frankie came home from Vietnam and began telling me stories, my blood started to boil. I knew I had something—an anger, an energy, an artistic point of view. It was time to stop playing games.”⁶⁷ According to scholar Michael Eric Dyson, Gaye’s mission at this historical moment was to stir his audience’s civic conscience, address the world’s sociopolitical ills, and produce socially relevant music.⁶⁸ Gaye had become particularly frustrated over the dispirited nature of American political engagement by the 1970s. He contended, “I cannot understand how we human beings can let a few powerful men in the world treat us like cattle, and insensitive people, and robots. We’re programmed, we’re sensitized, we’re Big Brothered, and we’re police-stated. We have no fight; we seem apathetic. It’s horrible.”⁶⁹

By 1971, Gaye decided to record and release his album *What’s Going On* as a response to the world he witnessed. The high-concept album was told from the point of view of a returning Vietnam veteran who witnessed an America replete with injustice, suffering, and hatred. Conflating his personal experiences of drug addiction, his depression over the death of his singing partner Tammi Terrell, and his brother’s deployment to Vietnam with those of a broadly defined black public, *What’s Going On* was initially never to have been released. Upon hearing the album’s title track, Motown’s founder Berry Gordy, unwilling to suffer the potential backlash over Gaye’s social critique, reputedly condemned the album’s title recording and questioned Gaye over why he was adamant to release protest lyrics over instrumentals that were far too unorthodox for mainstream rotation. Motown’s Executive VP Barney Ales, however, was desperate to maximize Gaye’s visibility in the marketplace. Together with Billie Jean Brown, the company’s head of quality control, Ales released the record without Gordy’s knowledge or approval. The result was over two million copies sold by 1972 and over a year spent on the Billboard charts.⁷⁰ While

cultural critics such as Mark Anthony Neal have argued that Gaye's album should be interpreted as a lyrical incarnation of King's nonviolent philosophy, segments of his album also highlighted strands of the Black Power pluralist philosophy.

For instance, in "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler) (1971)," Gaye managed to give presence to the silent masses of black working poor who had been historically and contemporaneously dislocated from community, social stability, and organized and institutionally based struggles for justice. While this segment of black America had often found that their only recourse for resistance often took the form of improvised and misdirected rage, symbolic of nationalist posturing, Gaye depicted them differently.⁷¹ Singling in on poverty as a pluralist political issue, Gaye demonstrated that this nationwide concern was inextricably tied to a full range of issues associated with black urban life throughout the recorded lyrics. Showcasing the continued malaise of the black working poor, Gaye highlighted the endless monetary problems that served as an ongoing impediment to the progress of the black underclass. Gaye criticized American institutions of power, in this case bill collectors, for disarming African Americans of the ability to better their circumstances. His critique also peripherally dealt with a corrupt police force that had failed to deal with an increase in crime levels and a federal government that continued to demonstrate its inability to resolve the ongoing Vietnam War. Gaye's resolution, which was to literally holler, signaled the lack of an accessible and articulate political language to adequately communicate black urban frustration. While this mood of helplessness offered no tangible solution, it presented listeners with a portrait of urban bleakness that served to demonstrate that the inability to confront urban plight through sociopolitical and socioeconomic redress had left countless inner cities in appalling circumstances.⁷² According to musicologist Joanna Demers, this focus on urban realism built upon the social and personal expression in the blues in that it decried the ghetto, once a thriving urban center, now a purgatory where working-poor African Americans, forgotten by society at large, suffered repression from without as a consequence of racist governmental policies, and degradation from within as a consequence of black-on-black violence and drug economies.⁷³

Unlike Brown, Gaye used live performance opportunities while promoting his 1971 album to intensify his critique. In a video montage originally featured in a long out-of-circulation film called *Save the Children*, Gaye performed the recordings "What's Going On (1971)" and "What's Happening Brother (1971)" against a set of images that depicted the black urban experience. Conflating lyrical concerns over the Vietnam War, the erosion of communal discourse within the African American community, and the acute incidence of drug addiction, racism, child neglect, and spiritual crisis,⁷⁴ Gaye's vocals rang out against the backdrop of footage laced with images of gang graffiti, storefront churches, Afrocentric stores, dilapidated buildings ridden with broken windows, and Soul food restaurants. Featuring a side of black urban America rarely depicted, Gaye also highlighted the richness of community cookouts, functioning nuclear families, fathers actively investing in their children, and children happily participating in leisure activities. However, these images were numerically overpowered by illustrations of black plight, particularly the problems of massive unemployment, economic restructuring, single motherhood, neglected children, and police surveillance.⁷⁵ In his role as observer and critic, Gaye unveiled

the multidimensional face of urban black America. However, his artistic choice to overpower positive imagery with discouraging realities suggested to audiences that the black experience continued to be riddled with far too many grievances even as there were noted successes.

As the 1970s neared its mid-decade mark, a number of *Politico-Soul/Funk* contributions began to tackle how systemic disempowerment, corrupt state power, and the rise of the New Right determined the conditions of America's racialized urban poor. In order to do so, many artists tapped into the third subcategory of Black Power nationalism, Black Power counter-communalist ideology. Counter-communalism held that the fundamental problem facing black and Third World peoples was American-led, capitalist control of international economic affairs. In order to end this form of exploitation, blacks had to organize both nationally and internationally to overthrow the effects of capitalism and white supremacy.⁷⁶ Rejecting the existing American system, counter-communalists advocated for the building of a new nation state with universal law, order, justice, and the right to self-determination for all people.⁷⁷

Of 1,123 recordings surveyed across 126 albums, 23.9 percent (268 titles) intended to mobilize listeners around the very issues of systemic disempowerment and state power that Black Power counter-communalists were concerned with. Among the 268 titles, 44.8 percent (120 recordings) focused on encouraging Americans of all stripes to become active citizens; 11.6 percent (31 titles) focused on pro-peace/anti-Vietnam war activism, 29.4 percent (79 titles) targeted race, class, and gender equity, and 14.2 percent (38 titles) exposed corrupt power structures at local, state, and national levels. Of the 268 recordings, 32 percent (85 titles) of the songs appeared in the years 1970 and 1971, with these themed recordings dramatically dropping in 1972 to 7 percent (20 recordings). Among the recordings were titles such as Nina Simone's "The Times They Are a Changin' (1969)," Sly & The Family Stone's "Stand! (1969)," Roberta Flack's "Business Goes On As Usual (1970)," Gil Scott-Heron's "Who'll Pay Reparations on My Soul (1970)," Curtis Mayfield's "Keep On Keeping On (1971)," James Brown's "The Whole World Needs Liberation (1971)," Donny Hathaway's "Someday We'll All Be Free (1973)," and Isaac Hayes' "Unity (1977)." Those who most engaged in these sorts of recording were Gil Scott-Heron with 71 recordings (27 percent), Curtis Mayfield with 40 recordings (15 percent), and Nina Simone with 25 recordings (14 percent).⁷⁸

For Gil Scott-Heron, adhering to counter-communalist ideology was central. In his track "Brother (1970)," Scott-Heron criticized African Americans for always, "deal[ing] in too many externals...always afros, handshakes, and dashikis."⁷⁹ Instead, Scott-Heron argued that informed racial consciousness necessitated an awareness of the ways in which the daily realities of the urban underclass were subtly, yet intrinsically tied to systemic racism and classism and the bold misuse of state power. In his track "Whitey on the Moon (1970)," Scott-Heron demonstrated this in his rapping by contrasting persistent, commonplace social ills such as "the man just upped my rent," with the extraordinary, yet racially exclusive achievements of the space race.⁸⁰ Scott-Heron suggested that the disenfranchisement of the racialized urban poor did not stop at local power structures. Rather, these depressed living conditions were a consequence of the reallocation of federal funds

to programs such as the Apollo 11 space mission, and away from social reform programs intended to eliminate poverty and racial injustice. Scott-Heron's decision to articulate counter-communist ideology meant that at first glance many misinterpreted his work as militant and anti-white. However, many journalists later argued that his music, while less-compromising and strong, was justifiably angry, accurate in its observations and above all, educational.⁸¹

Much of Gil Scott-Heron's work was inspired by the intention to bring a new dimension to black music. In 1975 he told *Rolling Stone's* Sheila Weller, "There are 360 degrees of the black experience... but the same [story] kept being sung about: sex-and-love, love-and-sex."⁸² Though he spent much of the early 1970s positioning music as something he liked to do, given that he "didn't see [him]self as a recording artist,"⁸³ he claimed that he was uncomfortable by the ways in which those who consumed his music did so one-dimensionally. Scott-Heron argued that, "It was pretty obvious that there was an entire Black experience and it didn't relate only to protest. We [he and his team] dealt with all the streets that went through the Black community, and not all of those streets were protesting."⁸⁴ Scott-Heron contended that most times, audience members actually wanted to discuss the recordings that had nothing to do with politics. Rather, they wanted to discuss those that were far more personal and private in nature. Though he was never interested in joining a particular political organization, given that he was wary of making enemies and wanted to be available to any and all activists intent on positively affecting the black community, he argued that his absolute priority was to convince his audience of the capitalist war on the middle and working class. Scott-Heron claimed that he had to persuade people to "look in their pocketbooks" for a reason to get involved in politics. It was here where average Americans bore witness to the power of the capitalist centralized state, and where they recognized that, "[There] was a war going on in [America] and [that they needed] to find [their] best weapon."⁸⁵

Scott-Heron's critique of the Nixon administration and the Watergate scandal perhaps best highlights his intention to employ counter-communist ideology in order to draw large-scale connections between corrupt state power, systemic disempowerment, the rise of the New Right, and white supremacy. According to Scott-Heron, "H²Ogate Blues (1974)," was his way of explaining to audiences who existed outside of the social and political world of Washington, DC, what that world was truly about.⁸⁶ According to African American Studies scholar Tony Bolden, at the core of all of Scott-Heron's work was a concern over the contradiction between America's public ideas and its role as a white supremacist aggressor.⁸⁷ Bolden contends that "H²Ogate Blues," a recording that was widely popular among black working-class youth, was a counter-narrative about the consequences of state-sanctioned ideological conditioning. In the recording, Scott-Heron, he argues, intended to demonstrate that the project of obscuring and misrepresenting the historicity of American imperialism as democracy, by disguising the contradictions between the haves and have-nots, engendered a counterfeit philanthropy that transformed into a self-righteousness that reified white presumptions of entitlement.⁸⁸ By linking Cold War paranoia, unauthorized bombing raids in Vietnam, C.I.A. and Wall Street corruption, and the assassination of black radical activists throughout the recording, Scott-Heron highlighted the ways in which the actions of federal officials were

deeply connected to the ongoing impediments to black urban life, and the working class in particular. Questioning how long citizens were willing to permit the failures of government, Scott-Heron asked,

How long America before the consequences of keeping the school systems segregated, allowing the press to be intimidated, . . . and hearing complaints 'cause the rich want more? We've let him [Nixon] eliminate the whole middle class, while the poor go on without a new minimum wage. And there are those who say America's faith is drowning beneath that cesspool-Watergate.⁸⁹

Seventeen months later, following President Nixon's resignation, Scott-Heron wrote a sequel to "H²Ogate Blues," titled "Pardon Our Analysis (We Beg Your Pardon) (1975)." In it, Scott-Heron dealt with Nixon's near-impeachment and the indictment, conviction, and incarceration of several top administration officials. Scott-Heron's condemnation of the administration was clearest when he stated,

They call it due process and some people are overdue. Somebody said 'brotherman gonna break a window, . . . brother man gonna go to jail.' The man who tried to steal America is not in jail . . . We understand and we beg your pardon.⁹⁰

Not only had Scott-Heron argued that the punishment did not fit the crime, but he insisted that Nixon's political corruption, coercion of the media, blatant disregard for the urban underclass, and favoring of the economically privileged was far worse than any petty crime committed by America's disenfranchised. Scott-Heron additionally critiqued the ways in which crime and punishment were racialized and class-based. Nixon in this case not only had the advantage of protection vis-à-vis his position as president, but also inherent in Scott-Heron's critique was the insinuation that white privilege had also served to shield Nixon from the associated punishment for conspiracy, burglary, and violation of federal wiretapping laws.⁹¹

By 1975, Scott-Heron argued that his music was intended to convince Americans that the time to act was imminent. Contending that the state was uninterested in peace, poverty, joblessness, housing issues, and inflation, Scott-Heron told his interviewer that he had labeled this historical moment "winter" in his recording work because it was the "final season before people [Americans] g[ot] their heads together, g[ot] their weapons . . . to deal with the future." Scott-Heron claimed that the reference to "springtime" in his recording work was not a metaphor for revolution. Rather, it was intended to suggest that this was when those in power would experience karma for accosting and attacking ordinary Americans. Until then, Scott-Heron contended that he would be on the frontlines advocating for a change in American priorities and practices.⁹²

Despite the proliferation of *Politico-Soul/Funk* recordings in the early half of the 1970s, following 1976 the number of these releases began to shrink partly for market-related reasons. First, as cultural critic Mark Anthony Neal argues, by the mid-1970s much of the production and distribution of black popular music was successfully annexed by a small fraction of entertainment conglomerates. Hegemonic corporate production and marketing strategies meant that many black artists experienced

limitations on both their narrative and aesthetic content.⁹³ Additionally, many of the prominent Soul labels underwent dramatic changes, including the relocation of Tamla/Motown Records from Detroit to Los Angeles in 1972 and the bankruptcy of Stax Records in 1975.⁹⁴ Second, end-of-decade record sales and concert attendance indicated that the popular music business had experienced a slump due to consumer frustration with inflated prices.⁹⁵ Racially, by 1977 statistics indicated that whites who did purchase “black music” tended to be of the “AM-radio, dance-entertainment phenomenon.” As a consequence of the perception that a distinct self-contained black market existed, and given the intention among many black artists to speak candidly and unapologetically to black audiences, not only had white concert attendance declined, but white FM audiences, those who looked to popular music to fulfill deeper emotional needs, often expressed feeling cut off from the musical idioms and psychological concerns of black artists.⁹⁶

One of the most dynamic changes in the second half of the 1970s that fundamentally shifted the nature of the music market and the *Politico-Soul/Funk* critique was the popularity of Disco. By 1977, with the release of the film *Saturday Night Fever* (and its accompanying soundtrack) and the rise of New York City’s WKTU-FM, an all-Disco radio station, the nature of Disco’s audience broadened, and music industry tastemakers altered their promotion formats in an effort to profit from this burgeoning market shift.⁹⁷ By 1979, there existed over 25,000 American discos that generated six billion dollars a year in revenue and over 200 all-Disco radio stations; the industry was grossing over four billion dollars a year in Disco-specific revenue.⁹⁸ Many *Politico-Soul/Funk* artists responded to this shift in their lyrics and through their instrumentation choices; not only did many of these artists fuse Soul/Funk with Disco instrumentation in order to stay competitive in the marketplace, but they also replaced their rousing socio-political material with lyrics and thematic content centered on leisure, love, and sexuality.⁹⁹ According to historian Gillian Frank, between 1977 and 1979, as Disco saturated the market, artists shifted their content and instrumentation, and cultural gatekeepers altered their industry practices, the genre also became increasingly safe for mainstream consumption, particularly for white, straight, male, young, and middle-class Americans.¹⁰⁰

By 1979, however, these changes manifested themselves in violent reactions to Disco’s popularity, which signaled yet another industry shift, this time an instance of cultural gatekeeping and surveillance guided by concerns over gender and sexuality rather than race. By the late 1970s, Disco was construed, particularly by those in Rock, as a mass-produced and mechanistic sound of escapism and complacency that had come to dominate radio at the expense of Rock music.¹⁰¹ Considered a primarily marginal urban gay male and African American form, with the frequent participation of Latinos and other ethnic groups, Disco from its origins, Frank contends, was associated with cultural difference. Though by the end of the 1970s the genre came to be largely shaped in mainstream discourses by a predominantly sexualized framework that positioned the music as transgressive, sexually liminal, and threatening to the sustainability of masculinist popular music, particularly Rock.¹⁰² Across the United States, in cities such as Seattle, Detroit, Los Angeles, and most famously Chicago during Disco Demolition night at Cominsky Park on July 12, 1979, the anti-Disco backlash highlighted acts of intimidation and violence against a genre

of music that represented a number of marginalized identities, particularly queer identities.¹⁰³ Within the decade-long process of what Susan Jeffords has called the remasculinization of America,¹⁰⁴ these various anti-Disco instances marked moments that depended on the exclusion of women and the supposedly effeminate in order to affirm and privilege heterosexual interactions, spaces and allegedly authentic masculinity.¹⁰⁵ In the process however, not only did the *Politico-Soul/Funk* critique suffer, but so too did those artists who had capitalized upon the marketplace's embrace of Disco. Though the anti-Disco backlash resulted in the rapid decline of Disco and the reemergence of Rock under the subgenres of Punk and New Wave,¹⁰⁶ so too did it result in the mainstream birth of Hip Hop, yet another hetero-masculinist cultural articulation, this time from African American and Latino American youth.

Despite these changes, when Americans celebrated the United States Bicentennial in a series of observances in 1976, *Politico-Soul/Funk* artists came to find themselves knee-deep in a critique of the very tenets the American Revolution had been fought to safeguard. Journalist Greil Marcus argues that by the mid-1970s the sea change in lyrical content was hugely affected by a confluence of social and political factors that included black radicalism's loss of momentum, the repressive policies of the Nixon–Ford administrations, and the concurrent preoccupations with Watergate, the energy crisis, and the final days of the Vietnam War.¹⁰⁷ In his track “Bicentennial Blues (1976),” Gil Scott-Heron argued that 1976 was “a blues year, and America ha[d] got[ten] the blues because of partial deification, of partial accomplishments, over partial periods of time. Halfway justice. Halfway liberty. Halfway equality.”¹⁰⁸ While *Politico-Soul/Funk* recordings had diminished by decade's end, politically inclined African American artists had spent nearly ten years observing, interrogating, and critiquing the subject matter they deemed necessary to elevate American consciousness. As Gil Scott-Heron had warned, the battle for American hearts and minds on issues particular to the racialized urban poor had been lived, experienced, contended with, and exposed. The 1970s for black popular music was a particularly interesting moment; artists had managed to capitalize upon the ebbs and flows of black liberation in order to transcend multidirectional attempts to arrest the progressive thrust of the movement. Even as certain elements of the black liberation struggle had been rendered passive as a consequence of the commodification of the movement's goals and its icons, this historical moment also enabled a verifiable *Politico-Soul/Funk* critique that demanded the raised consciousness of mainstream America. The cover of Gil Scott-Heron's 1970 liner notes captured the decade best: “[Gil Scott-Heron] is the voice of the new black man, rebellious and proud, demanding to be heard, announcing his destiny: ‘I am coming!’”¹⁰⁹ Scott-Heron's cover, as metaphor, represented a moment in which black popular music capitalized upon the opportunity to record the revolution and contribute to the era's changing tide by vocalizing a series of its own ideological perspectives.

Notes

1. Robert Bowman, *Soulsville, U.S.A.: The Story of Stax Records* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1997), 144.
2. Bowman, *Soulsville*, 144.

3. Bowman, *Soulsville*, 144–146.
4. Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 2010), 150.
5. David P. Szatmary, *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock-and-Roll* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2004), 173.
6. Francesca D'Amico, Politco-Soul/Funk Idiom Database, 1968–1979. Organized and collected by Francesca D'Amico, September and October 2011; this database has been collected by this author for a larger dissertation project (in progress) of which this chapter is a part.
7. For additional information on the methodology informing the use of textual analysis in this chapter, please see Angela Y. Davis on Blues women and the post–World War I and interwar period, Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday* (New York City, NY: Random House Inc., 1998).
8. Mark Anthony Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and the Black Public Culture* (New York City, NY: Routledge, 1999), 42–44, 51–53, 88–90.
9. Mark Anthony Neal, *What the Music Said*, 42–44, 51–53, 88–90.
10. Michael Eric Dyson, *Mercy, Mercy Me: The Art, Loves and Demons of Marvin Gaye* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2004), 48.
11. Neal, *What the Music Said*, 56–62.
12. William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 412–414.
13. Black Power pluralism held that the interrelationship between individual and group power was crucial. Believing that economic and political access to power was divided among a number of competing ethnic and racialized groups, pluralists argued that the inability of African Americans to obtain an equal access to power stemmed from their failure to mobilize into an effective bloc that stressed collective success over individual achievement. The solution was to use issue-oriented coalition politics in order to draw together and empower disparate groups around issues of overriding importance at the state and national levels. For additional information on Black Power Pluralism, see John T. McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African American Political Thought* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), 116–117, 150–182.
14. Black Power nationalism advocated on behalf of efforts to reclaim, preserve, and strengthen an in-group identity, this time for reasons of exercising choice, power, and the maintenance of long-term sociocultural autonomy. Interested in averting assimilation and withdrawing from the body politic, nationalists tended to believe that African Americans had to be awakened and unified in order to understand that they must define and establish their own values in order to succeed in their struggle for power. For additional information on Black Power Nationalism, see William L. Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965–1975* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 25–27, 112–118, 129–131 and John T. McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African American Political Thought* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), 118–177.
15. Signifying practice is considered an intrinsically subversive rhetorical device whereby the speaker uses words and phrases that are indirect, repetitive, and meant to foster new meanings outside of the mainstream discourse. For additional information on signifying practice, see Dick Hebdige, "Style as Homology and Signifying Practice," in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Andrew Goodwin and Simon Frith (London: Routledge, 1990), 60–61.
16. David Brackett, "The Politics and Practice of 'Crossover' in American Popular Music, 1963 to 1965," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 311.

17. Van Deburg, 194–95, 217–219; Brackett, 312.
18. Robert Shelton, “James Brown Scores Knockout with Soul Music at the Garden,” *New York Times*, November 23, 1968 (national edition), 60.
19. Joel Whitburn, *Joel Whitburn Presents: Top R&B/Hip-Hop Singles, 1942–2004* (Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, MI: Record Research Inc., 2004), 84.
20. James Brown, “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud),” 1968, *Say It Live and Loud: Live in Dallas 08.26.68* (Polydor 31455 7668–2, 1968).
21. Brackett, “The Politics and Practice of ‘Crossover’ in American Popular Music,” 313; Farai Chideya (host) featuring David Leaf, “The Night James Brown Saved Boston,” *NPR radio interview: News & Notes* (April 1, 2008, 9:55 minutes).
22. James Brown, *The Godfather of Soul: An Autobiography* (New York, NY: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2002), 196.
23. Brackett, “The Politics and Practice of ‘Crossover’ in American Popular Music,” 313; Farai Chideya (host) featuring David Leaf, “The Night James Brown Saved Boston,” *NPR radio interview: News & Notes* (April 1, 2008, 9:55 minutes).
24. Brown, “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud).”
25. Brown, *The Godfather of Soul*, 200; Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, 156.
26. Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, 154; Rickey Vincent, “James Brown: Icon of Black Power,” in *The Funk Era and Beyond: New Perspectives on Black Popular Culture*, ed. Tony Bolden (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 60.
27. Brown, *The Godfather of Soul*, 197, 200, 202.
28. Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, 140.
29. Vincent, “James Brown: Icon of Black Power,” 58; Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, 139, 153.
30. Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, 139.
31. Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon*, 170–71, 181.
32. Africanisms are described as flexible conceptual frameworks that have survived throughout slave capture, changing and adapting to diasporic conditions in order to inspire creativity throughout the Americas. This framework, in relation to music-making, includes an aesthetic of group participation: a performance style that uses body language and dress to convey a sense of being hip and emotionally intense; an aesthetic of sound that encourages the expressive use of timbre; an improvisatory sense that privileges the reinterpretation of familiar material over being faithful to the original; and a preference for topical music and social commentary. This framework has helped scholars of African American music understand how black musicians have built upon the foundation of inherited African values, styles, and sensibilities. For additional information on Africanisms, see Joseph E. Holloway, ed. *Africanisms in American Culture*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005).
33. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, *African American Music: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 51–54; James Stewart, “Message in the Music: Political Commentary in Black Popular Music from Rhythm and Blues to Early Hip Hop,” *The Journal of African American History* (2005): 313.
34. Mark Anthony Neal, “Trouble Man: The Art and Politics of Marvin Gaye,” *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 252.
35. A rhythmic technique meant to shift the accent to the weak beat of the bar.
36. A succession of two distinct phrases usually played or sung by different musicians, where the second phrase is heard as a direct commentary on or response to the first.
37. The technique of changing the note (pitch) of a single syllable of text while it is being sung.

38. A method of voice production employed by male vocalists, especially tenors, to alter their singing range in order to sing notes at a higher pitch using more air and a combination of vocal chord vibration and head resonance.
39. Robert W. Stephens, "Soul: A Historical Reconstruction of Continuity and Change in Black Popular Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 26–27; Joyce Marie Jackson, "The Changing Nature of Gospel Music: A Southern Case Study," *African American Review* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 192; Jon Fitzgerald, "Motown Crossover Hits 1963–1966 and the Creative Process," *Popular Music* 14, no. 1 (January 1995): 3–4.
40. A number of albums made their fame on this rhythmic-focused sound including: Sly & The Family Stone's *There's A Riot Goin' On* (1971), Isaac Hayes' *Shaft* (1971), Curtis Mayfield's *Super Fly* (1972) and Stevie Wonder's *Innervisions* (1973).
41. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 109–110; Burnim and Maultsby, *African American Music*, 296–303.
42. Robert Palmer, "How Funk Grew Up," *New York Times*, October 21, 1979 (national edition), D26.
43. Francesca D'Amico, "Black Pride and Community," Politico-Soul/Funk Idiom Database, 1968–1979. Organized and Collected by Francesca D'Amico, September and October 2011.
44. Roberta Flack, "Trying Times," 1969, *First Take* (Atlantic, SD 8230, 1969).
45. Roberta Flack, "Angelitos Negros (Black Angels)," *First Take* (Atlantic, SD 8230, 1969). Analysis taken from the original lyrics set in Spanish as translated by the author.
46. Nina Simone and Stephen Cleary, *I Put A Spell On You: The Autobiography of Nina Simone* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1991), 95–96.
47. Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 300; Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 80.
48. Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 97, 111–112.
49. Nina Simone, "To be Young, Gifted and Black," 1969, *Black Gold* (RCA Victor, Recorded live at Philharmonic Hall, New York on October 26, 1969, LSP-4248, 1970).
50. Curtis Mayfield, "We the People Who Are Darker Than Blue," 1970, *Curtis* (Curton Records, CRS 8005, 1970).
51. Judy Klemesrud, "There's Now Miss Black America," *New York Times*, September 9, 1968 (national edition), 54.
52. Mayfield, "We the People Who Are Darker Than Blue."
53. Waldo E. Martin Jr., "Representation, Authenticity and the Cultural Politics of Black Power" in *The Cultural Turn in U.S History: Past, Present and Future*, ed. James W. Cook, Lawrence B. Glickman and Michael O'Malley, 256 (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).
54. Maultsby, 55.
55. Gerald David Janes, *A Common Destiny: Blacks and the American Society; Committee on the Status of Black Americans, Commission on Behavioural and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council*, (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1989), 273.
56. Janes, *A Common Destiny*, 274–279.
57. Francesca D'Amico, "Inner City Conditions: Drugs, Employment/Unemployment, Urban Decay, Economy and Poverty, Crime and Violence and Family," Politico-Soul/Funk Idiom Database, 1968–1979. Organized and Collected by Francesca D'Amico, September and October 2011.

58. Black separatism, another sub-category of Black Power Nationalism, intended to create a separate black community in order to correct the imbalance in social, political, economic access to power. Separatists were famously known for advocating for the use of violence, if need be, in order to reconstruct society along desirable lines.
59. McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies*, 119–120, 177.
60. James Brown, “I Don’t Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing (Open Up The Door I’ll Get It Myself),” 1970, *Sex Machine* (King Records, KS-1115, 1970).
61. Brown, *The Godfather of Soul*, 197, 203.
62. Brown, *The Godfather of Soul*, 206–207.
63. Vincent, “James Brown: Icon of Black Power,” 60–61.
64. Donny Hathaway, “The Ghetto,” 1970, *Everything Is Everything* (Atco, SD 33–332, 1970).
65. Neal, *What the Music Said*, 81–82.
66. Dyson, *Mercy, Mercy Me*, 52–53, 59.
67. David Ritz, *Divided Soul: The Life of Marvin Gaye* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1985), 140.
68. Dyson, *Mercy, Mercy Me*, 69, 73.
69. Dyson, *Mercy, Mercy Me*, 70.
70. Dyson, *Mercy, Mercy Me*, 61–62; Neal, *What the Music Said*, 56, 63.
71. Neal, *What the Music Said*, 63–66.
72. Marvin Gaye, “Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler),” 1971, *What’s Going On* (Motown, 2815 ML, 1971).
73. Joanna Demers, “Sampling the 1970s in Hip Hop” *Popular Music* 22, no. 1 (2003): 45.
74. Stewart, “Message in the Music: Political Commentary in Black Popular Music from Rhythm and Blues to Early Hip Hop,” 208–209; Marvin Gaye, “What’s Going On,” 1971, *What’s Going On* (Motown, 2815 ML, 1971); Marvin Gaye, “What’s Happening Brother,” 1971, *What’s Going On* (Motown, 2815 ML, 1971).
75. Marvin Gaye’s *What’s Going On/What’s Happening Brother* as performed for a special titled “Save The Children” on September 27, 1972. See, *Marvin Gaye: The Real Thing in Performance, 1964–1981*, Released April 4, 2006.
76. Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon*, 153.
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78. Francesca D’Amico, “Activism and State Power: War and Peace activism, Consciousness, Equity and Freedom, Institutional Power Structures, Collectivism and Unity,” Politico-Soul/Funk Idiom Database, 1968–1979. Organized and Collected by Francesca D’Amico. September and October 2011.
79. Gil Scott-Heron, “Brother,” 1970, *Small Talk at 125th and Lennox* (Flying Dutchman Records/RCA, FD-10143, 1970).
80. Gil Scott-Heron, “Whitey on the Moon,” 1970, *Small Talk at 125th and Lennox* (Flying Dutchman Records/RCA, FD-10143, 1970).
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CHAPTER 12

Jukebox Modernism: The Transatlantic Sight and Sound of Peter Blake's *Got a Girl* (1960–1961)

Melissa L. Mednicov

In 1957, a short article appeared in *Harper's Magazine*—an article that would handily summarize (and even satirize) the ways in which visual culture participated in the transnational features of rock and roll. In the article, a “Mr. Harper” tells of receiving a letter from a journalist in Communist Czechoslovakia. The (probably fictional) Czech wrote from behind the Iron Curtain to Mr. Harper: “I heard about rock ‘n’ roll. Is it a new style of jazz, or does it belong to popular music? I would be glad to hear it. How does Elvis Presley sing? I had lent a Canadian journal *Liberty*, issue from August 1956, and in this is a picture from Elvis Presley while singing and playing on guitar. He looks as in ecstasy.”¹ This is no doubt an American fantasy of what rock and roll’s global influence might ostensibly be when consumed by someone at the outskirts of America’s cultural reach, but it effectively summarizes the ways in which such a reach was achieved. Popular music was an export of imagery as well as sound. The Czech writer *sees* an image of Elvis before he *hears* him. The reader is left to guess at the reason the Czech writer has never heard Elvis Presley: that the Communist state has, in rock’s early stages, been able to control American music’s influx within their borders. And it is this image of the singer that makes him want to hear more. The *Harper’s* article hints at the transgressive nature of rock and roll—the music crossed both cultural and international boundaries (even an Iron Curtain).

A Painting with a Soundtrack

Got a Girl (1960–1961) by British Pop artist Peter Blake seizes upon the conflation of sound and image (Figure 12.1). *Got a Girl* combines found elements, and, most



Figure 12.1 Peter Blake, *Got a Girl*, 1960–1961, oil paint, wood, photo-collage, and record on hardboard, 37 × 61 × 1 3/8 inches, Collection of the Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester, © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London. Photo credit: Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester

remarkably, came with its own soundtrack. Included on its surface was the vinyl record of The Four Preps' single "Got a Girl," which hung by its central hole from a pin on the upper left of the work (it is now glued on). The rest of the upper register of the painted collage offers a series of headshots from magazines of teen heartthrobs mentioned in the song: Fabian, Frankie Avalon, Ricky Nelson, Bobby Rydell, and Elvis Presley—the latter of whom is shown twice, once in a frontal headshot, then in profile.

Got a Girl occupies a comfortable position in the art historical canon and is occasionally found in surveys of Pop art.² Christopher Finch includes *Got a Girl* "among the classics of British Pop."³ While this work has become familiar in scholarship about British Pop art, there have been very few mentions of Blake's unusual intentions regarding the viewing conditions of the work: In an interview I conducted with Blake in 2010, the artist stated that viewers were supposed to take the single down and play the record while looking at the painting.⁴ Blake's memory is confirmed by Ken Russell's 1962 BBC documentary *Pop Goes the Easel*, which features Blake taking the record down from *Got a Girl* and playing it while sitting and sipping his morning tea in front of the work. Many scholars have overlooked the function of the record, although Natalie Rudd, writing in the Tate Modern Artists series (2003), briefly mentions Blake's intentions, noting that "By including the record in the top-left corner, Blake hoped that viewers would listen to the song whilst looking at images of the girl's heroes. In doing so he effectively created a primitive pop video, pointing the way forward once again."⁵ But remarkably, no other scholarship has considered the broader implications of the record's inclusion on the surface of the work.⁶

When played on the phonograph, The Four Preps' song inflects our experience of the painting, imparting a lively party-like atmosphere to our viewing experience,

perhaps even encouraging us to dance in front of it. Blake's painting not only includes an emblematic physical device of popular music (the vinyl disc), but it also, I argue, uses the very structures of popular music—its favorite romantic idioms and its formal repetitions—as a means of ordering the painting itself. In the process, the painting investigates certain structures of rivalry and desire that popular music tapped into in the fifties: libidinal rivalries among young people, formal rivalries between mediums (both the visual and musical), and even rivalries and longings between national cultures. (Indeed, it is a function of Blake's contrapuntal imagination that his painting manages to use the libidinal currents of popular music as a means of allegorizing international relationships).

The Four Preps' "Got a Girl" laments the singer's fears that his girlfriend would rather be kissing teen heartthrobs than him. He worries that while his "girl" is kissing him, "it's plain to see there's someone else there too."⁷ The chorus reveals the protagonist's fears that the unnamed girlfriend's lust for teen stars usurps his own position in her thoughts; "Yeah, there was Fabian, Avalon, Ricky Nelson, too . . . Bobby Rydell and I know darned well Presley's in there too."⁸ The song's lyrics evidence the extent to which Blake's painting follows the formal attributes of the song by listing the musical rivals in a set and repeated order during the chorus. As Fabian, Frankie Avalon, Bobby Rydell, Ricky Nelson, and Elvis Presley are named, their headshots, most of which come from cheap magazines, follow that progression in the upper register. These teen idols occupy the singer's (and his girlfriend's) thoughts as well as the work's own surface. The song and work are predicated upon male competition for one girl's affections. But on a broader level, we might read Blake's use of the song as an allegory that dwells on the larger competition between the United States and England in the realm of popular culture.

Repetition in Song and Pop Art

Blake's *Got a Girl* formally responds to the experience of a pop song, particularly to the phenomenon of the pop "hook": the riff or chorus that repeats in the song for the purposes of getting the listener to listen repeatedly. In the hook, the radio listener gets "caught" by different elements, such as melody, rhythm, or phrasing.⁹ Most often, the pop song uses the chorus as the part of the song most likely to "get stuck" in your head, to ensnare the listener. The repetitive nature of the pop hook is also what makes the song profitable; because listeners cannot get the song out of their head, they will purchase the record, sheet music, and so forth.¹⁰ Music historian Gary Burns cautions that these kinds of hooks are not always pleasurable; after all, the term "hook" connotes a sense of entrapment or addiction.¹¹

Blake's painting offers a pun on this device. The song's chorus ends with "Presley's in there, too" a phrase whose final word Blake seems to have purposefully misheard as "two"—hence the two Elvises at the top right of the painting. This repetition may be a function of the difference between a painting and a song. The song can effect repetition temporally—it is going to play the chorus (or hook) for us several times. In order for the painting to do such a thing, it needs a visual cue to encourage an encore of looking. Elvis thus serves a double function in the painting; his frontal headshot ends the chorus, but his profile image, which looks back at his cohort,

visually restarts it. His backward glance reminds the viewer to recommence the sequence of looking (and to keep listening), structurally achieving the effect of a chorus. It also enacts the obsessive character of a pop song, just as one often finishes listening to a song to immediately repeat the song, Elvis turns his head back toward the register he punctuates, visually replicating the chorus infinitely.

In choosing to focus on the hook, the painting is driving home the extent to which repetition is pop music's key mode of survival. A successful hook encourages multiple, even compulsive playing by fans listening at home. A good hook also ensures that a hit song will enjoy multiple playings by a radio station, which will in turn encourage the song's further profusion through the broadcast system, appearing on multiple radios at the same time. Thus, industrial reproduction and compulsive playing by teenagers create both a spatial and temporal expanse through repetition.¹²

In dwelling upon the hook, Blake's painting summarizes the logic of repetition. In its exploitation of mass-produced fan magazines as a chief medium, *Got a Girl* also relies upon the reproductive visual culture of pop music. Not only was the music itself cheaply produced, but an industry of imagery surrounding music followed. Movies, magazines, and other tie-in goods such as posters, pillows, scarves, nylon stretch bobby sox, and so on were produced quickly. *The New York Times*, in 1957, reported that retailers sold more than 20 million dollars worth of Elvis Presley merchandise.¹³

To dwell on this subject just a bit longer, this reproductive culture, and the effect of the popular song as something that never happens originally but always in and through repetition, reflects the very productive apparatus and environment—the recording process, in other words—through which popular music is made. The Four Preps' single, for example, is not a representation of a live performance, but a perfected repetition of a recording in a studio. As music historian Jonathan Sterne, in *The Audible Past*, has noted, from the birth of recorded sound and the gramophone, there has been neither original nor copy, even though, at the same time, there has been a constant, even mythic striving for a sense of sound reproduction that would be true to the "original." In striving for sound fidelity, the listener has been encouraged to place primacy on an "original" sound: early gramophone advertisements claimed that there would be no difference between the record and the original performance.¹⁴ As such, the very notion of the original is a product of reproduction. Sterne writes:

To consider the products of reproduction—original and copy—separate from the process, even in a philosophical exercise, is to confuse a commercially useful representation of reproduction with the ontological character of reproduced sound itself. "Original" sounds are as much a product of the medium as are copies—reproduced sounds are not simply mediated versions of unmediated sounds.¹⁵

The Four Preps' single thus has a dual function on Blake's work. It is the commercial representation of reproduction *and* reproduced sound itself. It presents the traditional reiterations of music's visual culture (the fan imagery that helps music spread its influence) and formally rehearses the repetitions of music in its formal

organization. In the process, it acknowledges the very repetitions upon which popular music relies.

The painting feeds off of the contradictions of reproductive culture as they operate in recorded sound. Blake's use of music doubles the loss of originality at work in the imagery of the painting (there are no originals for the photographs and the sitters for those portraits are but empty projections of manufactured celebrity).¹⁶ Additionally, Blake's mechanized chevrons on the bottom register echo the loss of the brushstroke, a cipher of artistic originality. In including the actual pressed vinyl record, Blake increases the reproductive features of visual imagery that would soon attract artists.

The American Invasion, or American Boys

Got a Girl's red, white, and blue chevrons (in addition to the vinyl disc's Capitol Records logo) intensify the workings of competition and identification as they operate on an international level. The chevrons chromatically relate to the flags of two countries: the American flag or Union Jack, although Blake has denied any nationalistic meanings in the work.¹⁷ Whether the work signals an American victory or British assimilation into a global economy of music, this tenuous exchange lingers. The painting's libidinal narrative relates to the broader issue of transatlantic cultural competition. This competition was inflected by the complex connotations of American popular music in England, particularly as it related to changing categories of class, age, and culture.

Just as rock 'n' roll music had taken American teenagers by storm, it enticed British youths. In December 1954, Bill Haley and the Comets' "Shake, Rattle and Roll" became America's first rock and roll hit. Haley also recorded Britain's first rock 'n' roll hit about a year later, "Rock Around the Clock." While British music critics bemoaned Elvis Presley's hits such as "Heartbreak Hotel," "Blue Suede Shoes," and "Hound Dog," their dislike made him all the more enticing to British youth.¹⁸ Part of British youth's appreciation of American music was a function of their new economic position; like their American counterparts, these British teenagers were experiencing a similar influx of leisure time and money, leading to increased demand for youth-oriented entertainment.¹⁹ British teenage consumption was often identified as "working-class" and "its most visible manifestations, from dance halls and jukeboxes to motorbikes and pop singers, were associated with young working-class men."²⁰ British concerns about class further complicated this transnational popular culture crossing.

Blake made *Got a Girl* during a period when class and culture were, to some British critics, turning positive differences into a murky sameness. In Britain, especially in the postwar period, many scholars perceived class as an increasingly unstable category.²¹ Blake's embrace of the new American mass culture was in sharp contrast with many cultural critics who attributed a shifting sense of class to American cultural imports. British cultural historian Richard Hoggart, in 1957's *The Uses of Literacy*, argued that the insidious influence of mass culture was destroying an authentic working-class culture with ties to the preindustrial past. In Hoggart's Marxist evaluation, mass culture was marketed toward the working class and would

eventually destroy that class's own, preindustrial culture. In one example, Hoggart traced the transition from pub-singing to jukebox as the most common form of popular music. Pub-singing, once the hallmark of working-class social life in organized members-only clubs, was supplanted by a mechanical jukebox, playing mostly American hit songs and transforming a shared cross-age experience into a youthful, working-class one.²²

The negative influence of American music was a common theme in the British news during this period. In 1956, *The London Times* ran a series of articles about riots of hundreds of youths in cinemas throughout England showing *Rock Around the Clock*.²³ The 1956 film presented a fictionalized account of the birth of rock 'n' roll, however, the main focus for audiences were the featured musical appearances by Bill Haley and His Comets, The Platters, and more. At a Manchester viewing of the film on September 10, 1956, 50 youths disrupted the showing by throwing light bulbs and flicking their cigarettes from the balcony onto people sitting below, followed by spraying hose pipes onto the crowd. The previous evening, on September 9, a "crowd of young people 'jived' through the centre of Manchester and halted traffic after leaving the Gaiety cinema, where they had seen the 'rock 'n' roll' film."²⁴ The article also cites "disturbances" in London, Lewisham, Kent, and Liverpool that same weekend.

The London Times tried to make sense of teenagers' rambunctious response to the film and rock 'n' roll in this fashion. In a *London Times* article on September 15, 1956, "Stimulus Behind 'Rock 'n' Roll' Disturbances," the author tries to make sense of these movie riots, especially since the movie had been shown at about 500 theaters before there had been any "disturbances."²⁵ The author writes, "Had there been no stories from America of 'rock 'n' roll' riots, they suggest, then it is most unlikely that there would have been any disturbances in the cinemas or the streets of this country."²⁶ American teenagers and their riotous ways are singled out as the root of British teen bad behavior more than the actual music. While American goods and entertainments were not new to Britain in the 1950s, British teenagers' embrace and emulation was unprecedented.²⁷ America is, then, not only the source of bad music and dancing, but a bad influence on Britain's youth.

The British riots brought girls and boys together in their exuberance over music. However, in *Got a Girl*, while boys' images and names overtake the chorus and the image, female desire is the subject. The singer's fears about competing with an international industry of heartthrobs provide the structure of the song. American boys were playing on jukeboxes, seen on movie screens, and setting a romantic standard that British boys had anxiety about meeting. And, one must include an additional nationalistic pressure upon the British men (and nation) in this period—the former imperialist power's dwindling colonies and reach were at their very last gasp in the fifties and sixties. The loss of national prowess surely must have had an emasculating effect on the country's men. Blake's *Got a Girl* seizes upon such fears: expressed by national pundits on one level and felt by individual British men on another. The carnival aspect of the bright signage (legible by hue as the colors of respective flags) also characterizes these headshots as if in a shooting gallery, quickening the song's intimation of male competition and fear of inadequacy. Rock 'n' roll was increasingly dangerous in its national as well as personal connotations.

And yet, The Four Preps' pop music is much milder and conservative in character than much of rock 'n' roll had been.²⁸ The song lacks the raucous beat, strumming pulsations, and teasing vocal breaks of Elvis Presley's "Stuck on You," released the same year as "Got a Girl." The Four Preps' sound shares similarities to The Lettermen (also painted by Blake), a style of crooning inherited from barbershop quartets. The dangers of rock 'n' roll seem abated and quieted by The Four Preps. Perhaps Blake is poking fun at the fears surrounding rock 'n' roll and, maybe, the girls who would scream for such a song. The single takes the edges off of rock 'n' roll, as, with the exception of Elvis Presley, the boys, such as Bobbie Rydell, were known for their more saccharine sounds.

As much as the boys' sounds were appealing to listeners, they were also visually appealing, too. While the sound of The Four Preps' single seems safe, its imagery may have been more loaded. *Got a Girl's* stars seem much more wholesome to our eyes than they did to parents in this period. There is something of an empty threat in his choice of The Four Preps. The song introduces a group of white, wholesome boys (Presley is a notable inconsistency) as the girl's daydreams. Each crooner, Presley remaining the exception, was handsome in a way most working-class British men were not: straight white teeth and big clean hair. These boys were clean and shiny—and very white. For "Got a Girl's" singer/boyfriend, these singers' whiteness makes them seem perhaps safer or more palatable as a rival. Indeed, their very whiteness made them datable to perhaps the singer and the (assumed white) girl.



Figure 12.2 Peter Blake, *Self-Portrait with Badges*, 1961, oil on board, 68 5/8 × 48 inches, Tate Collection, © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London. Photo credit: Tate, London / Art Resource, NY

In the late fifties and sixties, Peter Blake made some other images that hinged upon Elvis Presley's stardom and his fans' adoration such as *Elvis and Cliff* (1959), *Girls with Their Hero* (1959–1962), *Self-Portrait with Badges* (1961), and *EL* (1961), to name a few.²⁹ In his canonical work, *Self-Portrait with Badges* (1961; Figure 12.2), Blake presents himself as the ambivalent embodiment of youth fan culture. His denim jacket is filled with the badges that were a popular trend at the time. Indeed, Blake exaggerates this teen trend, filling his jacket to excess. And he holds in his hand an Elvis fan magazine, very likely the same type of magazine from which he took his *Got a Girl* headshots. Blake also indulges in a nearly self-pitying, melancholy self-portrait: here he is balding, slumping, and dressed a bit too young for his age. He borders on the ridiculous. He wears his fandom as a sort of armor: Elvis is that image that probably makes him feel inadequate, yet Blake clings to Elvis's images for camouflage. He covers his genital region with an Elvis Presley magazine cover (not unlike one of the Elvis images in *Got a Girl*), perhaps as a shield or enhancer. Fandom is poignantly staged as an almost pathetic enterprise. And he occupies a gap age, while not young enough to get caught up in the pandemonium of teenage excitement he was also too young to hate rock 'n' roll, either. He cannot quite compete with Elvis Presley or Cliff Richard for girls' attentions.

Blake was frequently attracted to such "wimpier" versions of rock and roll. Indeed, this might account for his preoccupation with the English version of Elvis, Cliff Richard, who from many perspectives alleviated the problems of class and national identity that the American singer suggested. One such work, *Elvis and Cliff* (1959), notably hinges upon a comparison between Elvis Presley's stardom and that of his English counterpart.³⁰ The work, made a year earlier than *Got a Girl* and *Self-Portrait with Badges*, anticipates some of the formal features of the latter work: distinct upper and lower registers, bold colors in the bottom, and images of singers from mass culture. *Elvis and Cliff*, measuring about 30 × 18 inches, features, in the top register, T-shirt transfer images of Elvis Presley and Cliff Richard. The transfers were a free promotion of *Boy Friend* magazine.³¹ Below each star's image rests a faded slogan such as "Elvis, You're the mostest!" and "Cliff, You're the tops with me!" A wooden partition separates the teen singers and a larger panel of red and mustard diagonal stripes.

While Presley was a white performer who "sounded black" and came from poor roots, Richard presented a different class conundrum in Britain. British rock journalist Nik Cohn wrote about Richard, "His most lasting influence, however, hasn't been his singing, his conversion, even his white smile, but his speaking voice. Before him, all pop singers sounded what they were, solidly working class. Cliff introduced something new, a bland ramble, completely classless."³² The hillbilly swagger of Presley—defining to many Americans as specific in class and region, poor and Southern—transformed in Britain to a classless, regionless non-accent. In Blake's *Elvis and Cliff*, Cliff Richard, the British pretender to Elvis Presley, meets his would-be American twin, and the two become a pair of potentially fast-fading (if their T-shirt reproduced faces are any indication) stars.

The competition between Elvis and Cliff, America and Britain, emerges in this painting on the level of modernist form as well. *Elvis and Cliff* shares *Got a Girl*'s general layout: male stars on top, a marked line, and a boldly colored design below.

The design of the bottom half recurs in many of Blake's collage paintings from this period. Marco Livingstone, in *Peter Blake: One Man Show*, considers the stripe design in these collage paintings in both a local and international scope:

Blake, as I have said, was quick to seize the implications of the works of Johns and Rauschenberg when he first saw them reproduced in the late 1950s, and under their influence took one stage further the object quality of his own earlier paintings. The decorative and dramatically simplified coloured backgrounds of his collage paintings of 1959–61 are as formally rigorous as any geometric abstraction, contributing forcefully to their eye-catching impact. The horizontal, vertical or diagonal bands of primary and secondary colours that give such heraldic impact to these pictures were intended, in part, as a comment on the hard-edged abstraction of the American painter Ellsworth Kelly and others whose work was just beginning to be shown in London and to be reproduced in international art magazines. Their immediate source, however, could be much more pedestrian. Such patterns could be seen, for instance, on railway rubbish bins, possibly as a visual code indicating a warning of danger.³³

Livingstone places these stripes both in the context of American hard-edged abstraction and the daily signs that fill London's streets. Blake's work then adds a more elite, high cultural American influence to the paintings by staging a pressured meeting between modernism and the daily, mass-produced kind of visual culture: hard geometry meets stop signs.³⁴ Livingstone, in choosing to emphasize Blake's American abstraction lineage, aligns *Got a Girl* with a quieter and more elitist mode of art making.

The Spatial Effects of Music

When looking for the social context for *Got a Girl*, we should not neglect the spatial context that the painting presumes. The painting crafts a collective space through its use of music. Collective space, here, is something understood as not existing on the surface of the painting, but in the space around it. This space is partly created by the 90-degree shift between the vertical canvas of *Got a Girl* and the horizontality achieved when the record is taken down and played. The record presumes a collective space organized around the three dimensions between the upright canvas and the lateral phonograph bed. As such, the painting enacts what Jonathan Sterne would later urge, namely, an ending to sound fidelity's isolation and a reassessment of sound's placement in human life, to "consider sound events in terms of their own social and cultural location, rather than beginning our analysis of reproduced sounds by treating each as a contender for the right to reign over the domain of *all* sounds."³⁵ The social and cultural location is not preoccupied with a point of origin; rather, once we accept sound as inherently reproduced, it gathers us together around a gramophone, it grounds us in that event of sound, and the reproduced sound becomes inherently social, too.³⁶ Sterne's argument that sound reproduction is a social process also considers space's importance as well. According to Sterne, sound offers three modes of understanding: "Considered as a product, reproduced sound

might appear mobile, decontextualized, disembodied. Considered as a technology, sound reproduction might appear mobile, dehumanized, and mechanical. But, considered as a process, sound reproduction has an irreducible humanity, sociality, and spatiality.³⁷ In this last sense, *Got a Girl* achieves spatiality.

But what space? There is a good chance that the work was never actually meant for a museum. With the exception of *On the Balcony* (1955–1957), Blake's works such as *Self-Portrait with Badges* or *Tuesday* (1961) did not enter Tate Britain's collection until the very late sixties or early seventies.³⁸ *Got a Girl* didn't enter the Whitworth Gallery at the University of Manchester until the late seventies.³⁹ Were The Four Preps' single to be played in that museum (an impossibility because the record is now permanently nailed down) it would colonize the room, fill the space, and change the viewing experience of other works as well.⁴⁰

The painting really was meant for a very different kind of environment and musical domain. First, one might consider the canvas a sort of painterly jukebox featuring a single hit. And that jukebox quality is important, given the cultural baggage, indeed transgressive baggage, jukeboxes carried in England at the time. Jukeboxes, an American export, primarily entered Britain due to American G.I.s' demands for the entertainments of home.⁴¹ In the early 1950s, jukeboxes were one of the few places British teenagers could hear rock 'n' roll.

Today, quiet, white-walled museums divorce Pop paintings from their original contexts, but, exhibitions of Pop works in the sixties came with sound; indeed, the aural often arrived in the form of a jukebox. Britain's first wave of Pop art, The Independent Group, introduced Pop with their exhibition, "This is Tomorrow," which filled the Whitechapel Gallery with music from a jukebox. In *Apollo*, an anonymous reviewer complained that the show's jukebox "screams the poorest kind of popular contemporary music, punctuated by barbaric yawns and squeals."⁴² Jukeboxes brought not only music into art spaces, guaranteeing sound; they also worked to encourage other associations.⁴³ Jukeboxes, filled with only the top hits, would add a "now" edge to the scene. Additionally, jukeboxes' main purpose was consumption, paying for songs one at time. Accenting the economics of a pop song, jukeboxes required audiences to pay to hear chosen songs right *now*, further illuminating the commercial interactions prevalent at both a bar and a gallery opening. And, this collapse of bar and gallery transgresses both spaces, bringing the potential activities of a bar (at minimum dancing but what else?) into the more elite spaces.

Got a Girl's "spatiality" also derives from the original contexts in which it first appeared. The film *Pop Goes the Easel* begins with Blake waking from a dream to find himself in his studio, whereupon he walks to *Got a Girl*, takes down the record, and plays it. To put it another way, Blake appears to start his day looking and listening to *Got a Girl* while sipping his morning tea. *Got a Girl*, then, was a studio work, even an apartment work—something directly associated with everyday life and quotidian habits. It also initiates an ethos of community-through-listening in the film. The painting provides the first music in the feature, initiating Blake's daily soundtrack. For the rest of the film, when Pop artists relate to one another, pop and rock songs serve as the soundtrack—sometimes with artists collected around phonographs.

In scholarship on film soundtracks, much has been written about how the visual dominates the aural. Sound effects and music are used to punctuate the visual, but ultimately, they serve as a support for visual cinematic display. As semiotician Christian Metz argues, even the technical language used to describe cinematic sound effects, such as “off-screen voice,” affirm the importance of the image and “conceptualizes sound in a way that makes sense only for the image.”⁴⁴ Indeed, when we discuss sound in film, he writes, often we “are actually thinking of the visual image of the sound’s source.” Metz describes how sound is consistently made secondary to image as well as the fallacies of such an argument: even when described as “off-screen,” sound can never truly be “off” or “on”; it either exists or it doesn’t. In some ways, sound alters both image and space (in Metz’s example, a film viewing experience); when sound is on-screen, “sound is simultaneously ‘in’ the screen, in front, behind, around, and is dispersed throughout the entire movie theater.”⁴⁵ What is interesting about *Got a Girl* is the extent to which the object inverts the power relationship between the visual and the audio as it functions in traditions related to the soundtrack. Where soundtracks typically fade into the background, Blake’s soundtrack erupts into the foreground. Rather than complementing the composition, sound occupies it, determines it. In this *paragone*, sound emerges as a powerful medium in competition with the visual.

The stakes of this competition, remarkably, are raised by Blake’s inclusion of music’s material matrix—the record itself. This object, which instantiates sound through visual and material cues, reminds the viewer of the pop music culture governing the work. To include such a thing in painting is, in effect, to thumb one’s nose at those self-appointed defenders of high culture who have focused their criticism upon the record-as-object. Theodor Adorno, no stranger to popular music criticism, wrote a short article in 1934, titled “The Form of the Phonograph Record.” In this piece, Adorno describes how sound reproduction damages high culture, mainly through the lies a record makes visually. The record, “as an artistic product of decline, it is the first means of musical presentation that can be possessed as a thing. Not like oil paintings, which look down from the walls upon the living.”⁴⁶ Somehow, records are objects and paintings animate. One grievance (of many) Adorno has against the record is that its shape does not correspond to the music held within its grooves.⁴⁷ Adorno, again, seeks to make a visual analogy to the record, writing that records are “possessed like photographs; the nineteenth century had good reasons for coming up with phonograph record albums alongside photographic and postage-stamp albums, all of them herbaria of artificial life that are present in the smallest space and ready to conjure up every recollection that would otherwise be mercilessly shredded between the haste and hum-drum of private life.”⁴⁸ Thus, for Adorno, the gramophone takes its place among objects treasured in middle- or lower-class homes. By clinging to the record as object, the bourgeois consumer enacts the nostalgia characterizing their sentimental connection to photos and other mantel-occupying bric-a-brac. The record becomes a deadening opiate, stale and frozen, upon which long past hopes and connections are made. Blake, in *Got a Girl*, uses The Four Preps’ record as both an object to look upon and as the key attribute of the work—the song’s music and lyrics animate its formal attributes and the space around it. Blake’s *Got a Girl* infuses its surroundings with the sights and

sounds of bourgeois pleasures and embraces the nostalgia and bric-a-brac against which Adorno rails.

Sounding Modernism

Modern art history has a tradition of supplanting other senses in favor of eyesight, of focusing its attention on a visual culture with a resulting neglect of the other senses. As I discussed earlier in relation to Jonathan Sterne's argument, the quest for sound fidelity offers an opportunity to discuss just what sound's fidelity, or original, has promised. Additionally, sound, when let out of the isolated box, is usually an event focused on a medium that brings people together. According to Clement Greenberg, an art object is only successful, and actually art, when its materials are self-evident and do not attempt to enter any other sensorial sphere.⁴⁹ This more elitist sense of how music should be contained and quarantined, and how one should conduct oneself when looking at a painting or listening to music, stands in direct contrast to Blake's *Got a Girl* and the tenets of Pop art.

Peter Blake came from an artistic movement steeped in visual and sonic connections. His Pop art belongs to an artistic generation that emerged in the period after The Independent Group. The group, coming out of the Institute of Contemporary Art, consisted of a mix of architects, artists, and critics: Peter and Alison Smithson, Richard Hamilton, Lawrence Alloway, Eduardo Paolozzi, and others. The group created the groundbreaking "This is Tomorrow" exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1956. This exhibition was intended as a treatise on Pop art; it also introduced sound into the gallery space. As previously mentioned, at the exhibit a jukebox played the current Top 20 pop hits.⁵⁰ In Pop art's formative moment, music was considered important to include in the exhibit (although this fact is often overlooked in scholarship). As opposed to white walls and quiet reflection, "This is Tomorrow" filled the exhibition space with images of Marilyn Monroe, space creatures, futuristic living quarters, and music.

To put it another way, Pop art required a soundtrack. Not only did paintings and exhibitions come with them, so did lectures. During the sixties, New York City gallerist Ivan Karp would often give lectures on Pop artists while records by The Four Seasons played.⁵¹ In Britain, Ken Russell's BBC *Pop Goes the Easel*, which introduced the British public to Pop art, featured artists such as Blake, Pauline Boty, and Derek Boshier in vignettes that showcased the artists with their works, all of which were set to blaring rock and roll. The film concluded with the artists dancing to music at a party surrounded by Pop art. Critics and filmmakers employed rock and roll as a backdrop, or a soundtrack, to these artists and artworks. In this way, the presentation and experience of Pop art directly contradicted the ethos of Modernism. Pop music and art were closely aligned in public discussions of the new art movement. These artists welcomed rock and roll to shatter those previously quiet, quarantined exhibition spaces. Pop artists demanded that sound enter visual spaces.

Other artists also incorporated sound into their works, shattering the Modernist insistence on art's silence. A good example is Robert Rauschenberg's combine painting *Broadcast* (1959), which relied upon both sight and sound.⁵² *Broadcast* was first shown at London's Whitechapel Gallery in 1964, and it is unlikely that Blake saw

the work before making *Got a Girl*. However, both artists chose everyday materials—and sonic ones at that—in their works. Unlike *Got a Girl*, *Broadcast* plays not pop music but what art historian Branden Joseph calls “a cacophonous audio collage.”⁵³ He describes *Broadcast* as a work that is both interrelated and specific; for the piece to function, sound and image are both separate and integrated. Each medium asserts its presence in the work, yet sound and sight combine to create another experience as well. As Joseph puts it, “Together, Rauschenberg’s amalgam of painting, collage, and radio conjured up the audio-visual conditions of sound film or television (both, incidentally, predicated on a certain type of montage) without ever simply collapsing into the illustration of either of these media.”⁵⁴ *Broadcast*, like *Got a Girl*, relies upon both sight and sound to come together to produce a new effect. While *Broadcast*’s Pop sensibility is decidedly different from *Got a Girl*’s, both works use audio as well as visual components to broaden how we experience the works.

The music that Blake, and other Pop artists, employed referred to a reproduced—and reproducible—sound. Music was repeated in various media: movies, magazines, and other tie-in goods such as posters, pillows, and so on were also produced as quickly as possible. Blake’s work feasts upon the different reproductive and repetitive qualities of rock and roll: publicity images, the song’s hook, the goal of the song—to be listened to over and over again; and, of course, the record itself, which reproduces a song infinitely. While the song “Got a Girl” plays and the viewer looks at *Got a Girl*, the viewer reproduces, visually, the words of the song. Blake’s work utilizes the essence of a pop song, its chorus and repetitions, to make a Pop painting about the pressures of national and class identity under mass culture. The viewer sees *and* hears the song. Blake’s *Got a Girl*, in his choice of song and visualization of heartthrobs, crosses sight and sound: when we see an image of one of those singers, their music plays in our ear, and when we hear their music, their image presses in our memory.

Notes

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1. John Fischer (under Mr. Harper), “Elvis, the Indigenous,” *Harper’s Magazine* (April 1957): 214.
2. Blake’s *Got a Girl* has been included in pop survey exhibitions such as David E. Brauer, Jim Edwards, Christopher Finch, and Walter Hopps’s show and edited volume *Pop Art: U.S./U.K. Connections, 1956–1966* (New York: D.A.P., 2001) and Paul Moorhouse’s *Pop Art Portraits* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

3. Christopher Finch, "London Pop Recollected," *Pop Art: U.S./U.K. Connections, 1956–1966*, 28.
4. Peter Blake (artist, London, England), in discussion with the author, July 20, 2010.
5. Natalie Rudd, *PB* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 29. Rudd does not discuss the implications of both looking and listening to Blake's *Got a Girl*.
6. Scholars have noted that the inclusion of a record and some other formal attributes relate to the collage's arrangement. Marco Livingstone, in Peter Blake's 2007 retrospective, also points to the lyrics' influence on the sequence of heartthrobs. Marco Livingstone, "The 1960s: The First Real Pop Artists?" from *Peter Blake: A Retrospective*, ed. Christoph Grunenberg and Laurence Sillars (London: Tate, 2007) 79. Livingstone, does not, however, elaborate upon the broader ramifications of this lyrical construction.
7. The Four Preps, "Got a Girl," released as a single in 1960 by Capitol Records.
8. Ibid.
9. Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 16.
10. Ibid.
11. Gary Burns, "A Typology of 'hooks' in Popular Records," *Popular Music* 6, no. 1 (January 1987): 1. See also Richard Middleton's article "'Play it Again Sam': Some Notes on the Productivity of Repetition in Popular Music" from *Popular Music* 3, Producers and Markets (1983): 235–270.
12. American and British radio systems were different in this period. It is difficult to quantify how often popular songs were played on British radio, as such songs were not played by the BBC and were mainly reached through individual purchases, jukebox playing, and pirate radio. Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 124.
13. Ibid., 134.
14. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: The Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 219.
15. Ibid.
16. See Graham Bader's article "Donald's Dumbness" for a discussion of how another Pop artist, Roy Lichtenstein, grappled with the Pop dynamic of commercial source material (among the article's other contributions to the field of Pop art). Bader succinctly describes the issue of originality (and therefore reproduction) in regard to Lichtenstein; "This was a fundamental paradox, and an equally fundamental realisation for Lichtenstein himself in 1961: that being an artist meant producing what didn't look like art, just as being original would mean questioning the very notion of originality itself." Graham Bader, "Donald's Dumbness," *Oxford Art Journal* 29, no.1 (2006): 96–113, 103.
17. Blake has denied such meanings in an interview with the author and Rudd, 29.
18. Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good* (New York: Abacus, 2006), 433–434.
19. See Mark Abrams, *The Teenage Consumer* (London: London Press Exchange, 1959) and *Teenage Spending in 1959* (London: London Press Exchange, 1959) and in Sandbrook, 409.
20. Sandbrook, 441.
21. Edward Royle, "Trends in Post-War British Social History" in *Understanding Post-War British Society*, ed. James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall (New York: Routledge, 2004), 14.
22. Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 126. Adrian Horn, *Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture, 1945–60* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2009), 66–67. Dick Hebdige, "Towards a Cartography of Taste 1935–1962," in *Hiding in the Light* (New York: Routledge, 1988),

places Hoggart within a context of cultural critics who viewed consumer culture as a decidedly American threat. These British cultural critics of the 1950s “equated the expanded productive potential opened up by the automation of manufacturing processes with the erosion of fundamental ‘British’ or ‘European’ values and attitudes and further associated this ‘levelling down’ of moral and aesthetic standards with the arrival in Britain of consumer goods which were either imported from America or designed and manufactured ‘on American lines.’” Hebdige, 47. See also Todd Avery’s *Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics, and the BBC, 1922—1938* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), for a thorough history of the origins of the BBC and their attempts to control music and taste in Britain.

23. “‘Rock and Roll’ Disturbances,” *The Times*, September 4, 1956, 5 and “‘Rock and Roll’ Disturbances, Film Halted in Manchester,” *The Times*, September 11, 1956, 8. For further analysis of rock films (or “jukebox musicals”), see David James’s article “Rock ‘n’ Film: Generic Permutations in Three Feature Films from 1964,” *Grey Room* no. 49 (Fall 2012): 6–31.
24. “‘Rock and Roll’ Disturbances, Film Halted in Manchester,” *The Times*, September 11, 1956, 8.
25. “Stimulus Behind ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll’ Disturbances,” *The Times*, September 15, 1956, 4.
26. Ibid.
27. Frith, 184.
28. Marco Livingstone describes The Four Preps singers as “crooning away in a style already fading fast under the onslaught of the more boisterous new music.” Marco Livingstone, *Peter Blake: A Retrospective*, 79.
29. Blake is equally (if not more so) well known for his works concerning The Beatles such as his painting *The Beatles* (1963–1968) and his 1967 album cover *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, codesigned with Jann Haworth.
30. Peter Blake’s *Elvis and Cliff* (1961) is an enamel paint and T-shirt transfer on board measuring 30 × 18 inches and is in a private collection.
31. Roger Coleman, *Peter Blake, catalogue of an exhibition, 17 November – 13 December 1969* (Bristol: Tate Publications, 1969), 18.
32. Nik Cohn, *Awopbopalooobop Alopbamboom: The Golden Age of Rock* (New York: Da Capo, 1996), 70.
33. Marco Livingstone, *Peter Blake: One Man Show* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 76.
34. While Livingstone reaches for American abstraction to give Blake more “serious” art prowess, another art historian, Christopher Finch, declared that despite *Got a Girl*’s American stars, “Blake remained profoundly British” and collage works such as *Got a Girl* “as near as he would ever come to assimilating the international idiom of the time, and they were justifiably influential.” Finch, 28.
35. Sterne, 221. Sterne’s use of italics.
36. Ibid, 223.
37. Ibid, 236.
38. *On the Balcony* entered the Tate Britain collection in 1963, *Self-Portrait with Badges* in 1979, and *Tuesday* in 1974.
39. *Got a Girl* was purchased for the Whitworth Gallery in 1976 by the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation.
40. As film music scholar Irwin Bazelon points out, viewers control what they see (they may simply close their eyes); however, the ear “is physically open at all times,” Irwin Bazelon, *Knowing the Score: Notes on Film Music* (New York: Van Nosrand Reinhold Company, 1975), 76. Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, in *Composing for the Films*, consider the ear a passive organ, because the eye is more used to discerning commodity culture, while

- the ear cannot keep up with technological changes. Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (London: Continuum, 2007), 13.
41. Horn, 20. Since the BBC had a monopoly on the airwaves, jukeboxes were placed on American military bases as morale boosters.
 42. "A Shaft from Apollo's Bow: This is To-Morrow—or Is It?" *Apollo* 64 (September 1956): 89.
 43. Another landmark exhibit, "Dylaby" (meaning Dynamic Labyrinth) in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum in September 1962, featured an international group of artists, including Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, Martial Raysse, and Robert Rauschenberg. Guests were invited to interact with the different works in the exhibition and one work, *Raysse Beach*, included a jukebox that played the top hits of the year. People were invited to enter the space and dance.
 44. Christian Metz, "Aural Objects," trans. Georgia Gurrieri, *Yale French Studies* no. 60. (Cinema/Sound 1980): 29.
 45. Ibid.
 46. Theodor Adorno, "The Form of the Phonograph," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *October* 55 (Winter, 1990): 58. Originally published as "Die Form der Schallplatte," in *Eine Wiener Musikzeitschrift*, 23: December 15, 1934: 17–19.
 47. Ibid, 56.
 48. Ibid, 58.
 49. See Clement Greenberg's thesis on the virtues (and purities) of mediums, "Towards a Newer Laocoön" (1940), reprinted in *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record*, ed. David Shapiro and Cecile Shapiro, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 61–74. Caroline A. Jones's chapter, "The Modernist Sensorium" in *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) provides a thorough history of how Greenberg negated all other senses in favor of sight.
 50. Marco Livingstone, *Pop Art: A Continuing History* (New York: Abrams, 1990), 35.
 51. Tony Scherman and David Dalton, *Pop: The Genius of Andy Warhol* (New York: Harper, 2009), 65.
 52. Robert Rauschenberg's *Broadcast* (1959) is an oil, pencil, paper, fabric, newspaper, printed reproductions, and plastic comb on canvas with three concealed radios measuring 61 × 75 × 5 inches, and is in the Kimiko Powers Collection, Colorado. Rauschenberg's *Monk* (1955) and *Canyon* (1959) are two other works from this period that incorporate sound as early predecessors to his E.A.T. works.
 53. Branden Joseph, "Rauschenberg's Refusal" in *Robert Rauschenberg: Combines* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005), 266–267.
 54. Ibid.

CHAPTER 13

Uninteresting Pictures: Art and Technocracy, 1968

Joshua Shannon

On the morning of November 23, 1968, Douglas Huebler sat on 42nd Street, taking pictures with his eyes closed. Having focused his lens on the Vanderbilt Avenue crosswalk, he shot ten photographs, each time tripping the shutter, as he archly put it, “at the instant that the sound of traffic approaching 42nd Street stopped enough to suggest that pedestrians could cross the street.” The result, which Huebler flatly called *Variable Piece #4, New York City, November, 1968*, was suitably, if comically, dull: ten indifferent photographs of mid-town pedestrians (Figure 13.1). In keeping with Huebler’s practice at the time, these images were exhibited in no particular order, together with a signed typescript coolly recounting the procedure.¹

The dry, bureaucratic look of *Variable Piece #4* is typical of much advanced art made in the Cold-War West around 1968. Refusing the psychedelic and anarchic visual rhetorics of the student left, many artists at the end of the 1960s also abandoned traditional modes of painting and sculpture in order to pursue what one art historian has memorably dubbed “the aesthetics of administration.”² Often assisted by the apparent objectivity of the amateur’s 35mm camera, much of this work, furthermore, paraded as an art of bare fact. “My pictures...are simply a collection of ‘facts,’” one artist declared; “[w]hat is good about a picture,” said another, “is...always factual.”³ This weird, stringent brand of realism—which affected painting, sculpture, and performance as well as photography—amounted to an international movement, a new mode of art-making for which I propose the name *factualism*. Taking North American photography and especially the work of Huebler as its subject, this chapter aims to understand factualism and especially to characterize its complicated and revealing relationship to the critical politics of the period.



Figure 13.1 Douglas Huebler, *Variable Piece #4*, New York City, November, 1968, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2007. The Panza Collection. Photo credit: Lee Stalsworth. © 2013 Douglas Huebler, courtesy Darcy Huebler / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

The factualist turn in the visual arts appeared in the context of the Cold War, Vietnam, and the age of protest. It was a period in which fact was highly valued, highly problematic, and under the pressure of rapid change. While in the broader culture facts generally served as evidence for rational, if not moral, conclusions, the factualist artists became especially interested in absurdly presenting information disconnected from interpretations or even from any apparent significance. Disinterestedness fascinated them, seeming at once the only defensible worldview (a necessary refuge from ideology) and a flat failure (not only impossible but also a rationalist cover for violence).

The artistic experimentation of factualism had photography at its root. It was founded on a notion that the camera might just work as the perfect means for



Figure 13.2 Vija Celmins, *Untitled (Ocean)*, 1968, graphite on paper, 12 5/8 × 17 9/16 inches, The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Lannan Foundation, 1997.106

capturing the world's threatening and liberating lack of essence, its existence as an endless fabric of indifferent fact. Factualism both courted such a worldview and rejected it, ultimately desiring and finding underlying structures in spite of itself.

Huebler is the key case study here, but he was hardly alone. Los Angeles artist Ed Ruscha, for example, had been publishing iterative photobooks such as *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* and *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* since early in the decade. John Baldessari's *The Backs of All the Trucks Passed While Driving from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, California, Sunday, 20 January 1963* was a grid of snapshots depicting exactly that, and Andy Warhol's eight-hour film *Empire* of 1964 showed the all-but-unchanging spire of New York's tallest building at night. Vija Celmins' drawing *Untitled (Ocean)* of 1968 (Figure 13.2) elaborately and precisely copies the momentary appearance a few minor waves. Jeff Wall, in his rambling, manifesto-like work *Landscape Manual*, described himself as only "somewhat more than just a 'recording machine,'" and proposed using three car-mounted movie cameras to capture a drive around Vancouver—a means, it would seem, to represent the occasion without "the delusion of *meaning*."⁴ Huebler, too, noted that his photo projects were "absolute documents," showing "nothing pictorially interesting," and stressed that they had been made "with the camera used as a duplicating device" without regard for "'aesthetic' decisions."⁵

Consider some of the photographs in *Variable Piece #4*. These images recall much of the city's celebrated street photography but apparently lack its judicious drama, its plenitude of lightly telling detail. In one of Huebler's shots, for example (Figure 13.3 at lower right), we are offered only the nondescript backs of several pedestrians loosely ambling away in fall coats, together with the poorly focused



Figure 13.3 Douglas Huebler, *Variable Piece #4*, 1968 (details), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2007. The Panza Collection. Photo credit: Lee Stalworth. © 2013 Douglas Huebler, courtesy Darcy Huebler / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

and unremarkable expression of a woman looking vaguely toward us while distractedly grasping her shopping bag and purse. In another image from the group (Figure 13.3 at upper right), we get an only slightly more eventful and dynamic picture: a large vacant space at the left sets off the somewhat awkward step of an approaching man wearing a moustache, necktie, and large glasses. Behind him we again see the backs of several coats and, at right, the blurry elbow of a man just entering the frame.

Comparisons to other New York City street photographs made in the years before reveal just how studiously unevocative Huebler's shots are. Roy DeCarava's *Woman and Children at Intersection* (Figure 13.4) makes an especially stark contrast to Huebler, using dramatic composition and fine printing to produce a clean metaphor of isolation and strength. But even the far scrappier photographs made in the sixties by artists such as Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, and Garry Winogrand still aimed for aptness, using uncanny rhythms and patterns to summarize the city, hold it together, and make it meaningful. How lacking in such explanatory power, by comparison, are the blandly distracted subjects of *Variable Piece #4*.

Most of the writing on art in this period has emphasized the work's antiaesthetic quality or its emphatic withdrawal of skill, understanding these traits as attacks on



Figure 13.4 Roy DeCarava, *Woman and Children at Intersection*, 1952, © 2013 Sherry Turner DeCarava

the luxury commodity status and individualism of modern art. This chapter argues instead that the most salient quality of much of the art of 1968 was its rejection of *truth* in favor of *fact*, its attack on the traditional idea that a picture could capture the essence of a place, person, or set of experiences. Understanding this new artistic orientation in relationship to a much broader antihumanist turn in Western culture in the period, this chapter interprets the art as an ambivalent inquiry—undertaken in the context of technocracy—into the feasibility and morality of disinterested reason. More specifically, it aims to show how Huebler’s work critiqued at once both rationalist technocracy and idealist humanism, using humor in an effort to establish a viable, if incoherent, relationship to a devastating world.

Huebler the Factualist

To start with, I want to try to be more precise about what it is that Huebler was trying to do, or, perhaps more importantly, what it is that he was trying very hard (if also playfully) *not* to do. Consider *Duration Piece #4, New York City, February, 1969*, a series of close-ups of New York facades, made just weeks after *Variable Piece #4*. For this work, too, Huebler made ten photographs, again devising a system to dictate when he would trip the shutter. Beginning at an “arbitrary location” at 8:45 a.m. and apparently walking around the city, he says he doubled the intervals between each shot, making pictures at 8:46, 8:48, 8:52, and so on, ending at 4:16 that afternoon.⁶ In the work’s text, he claims that he photographed “whatever ‘appearance’ existed closest to the camera (immediately to the left of the artist) at the exact instant that each such interval had elapsed.” The resulting photographs

look like an essay on the varied texture of New York's street walls, recalling works of Walker Evans or especially Aaron Siskind. But whereas those earlier photographs hung on shadow and exaggerated contrast to make even the most mundane places visually and metaphorically compelling, Huebler's images appear indifferently lit and printed, mostly inhabiting drab middle grays. The duller of them are all but totally without incident—mute fields of homogeneous concrete.

The next month, Huebler executed *Location Piece #9, New England, March, 1969*. For this work, the artist took an 11-mile drive through the countryside, snapping a picture each time the car's odometer indicated he had traveled another mile. This work seems emphatically to reject the tenets undergirding the long tradition of landscape art. In the place of glimpsed organizing essence, these photographs are serial records of sheer circumstance.

In another work made that February, Huebler aimed directly at the center of American modernist photography, making pictures of clouds to evoke Alfred Stieglitz's iconically expressive *Equivalents* (Figure 13.5). Although one is unlikely to mistake his pictures for Stieglitz's, Huebler is much closer to his sources here than before, indulging, however accidentally, in a lush variety of form and tone. The artist explains in the work's text, however, that the 13 photographs were shot from his passenger seat on a flight from New York to Los Angeles, with each one "made as the camera was pointed more or less straight out the airplane window (with no 'interesting' view intended)." This apparent indifference to what is captured already

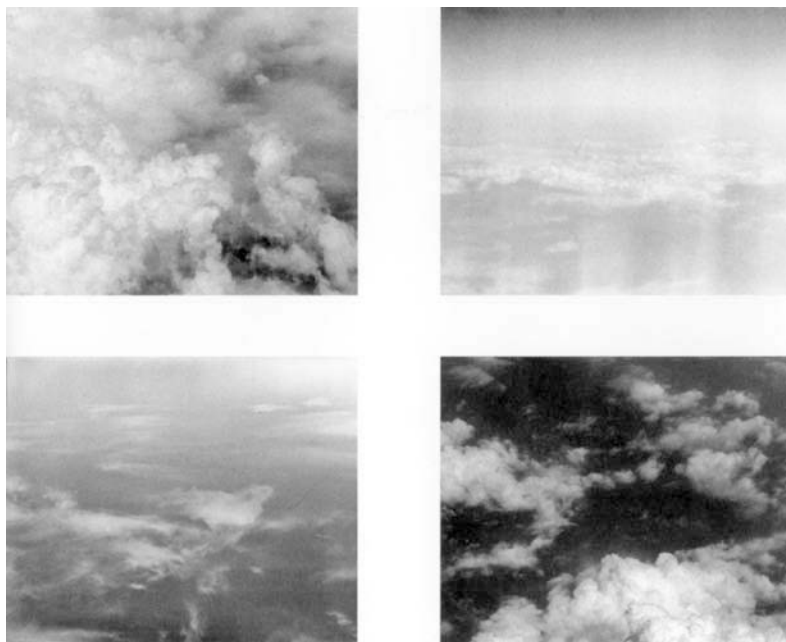


Figure 13.5 Douglas Huebler, *Location Piece #1, New York-Los Angeles, February, 1969* (details), © 2013 Douglas Huebler, courtesy Darcy Huebler / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

constitutes an attack on Stieglitz's idealism, his "faith," as one critic put it, "in the existence of a reality behind and beyond that offered by the world of appearances."⁷ But in this work, Huebler doubles his negation of traditional picturing, explaining that each photograph was made to represent (or, as the artist put it, rather more passively, to "mark") one of the "thirteen states flown over during that particular flight." Refusing to indicate which photograph pertains to which state (as if in any case he could have been certain of the boundaries of the air space), Huebler confronts his viewer with the absurdity of visually summarizing places with individual photographs. The work seems to suggest not only that we cannot see any Kentuckian or Ohioan quality in the sky, but also that such idealist notions are fundamentally mistaken, even corrupt.

Together, all these efforts amount to an assault (albeit an equivocal one, as we shall see) on the idealism at the core of the artistic tradition. Even photographers who rejected Stieglitz's poetics in the name of realism, such as Berenice Abbott, shared the notion that art should be used to uncover essential phenomena. The aim of her realism, Abbott wrote in 1951, was to use the "sensitive and delicate photographic emulsion" to "actually...set down...the soul of the city."⁸ In contrast, Huebler's aim, he explained, was "not...to...interpret or express anything." "I don't want (my) works to be clever, romantic, sentimental, you know, or nice, or anything like that." "I prefer simply," he said, "to state the existence of things in terms of time and/or place."⁹ He went so far as to say of one of his works, "No 'meaning' may be interpreted." The photos in another, he wrote, had been "stripped of all cultural associations except that of 'meaninglessness.'"¹⁰ Asserting that "Things...are only things," Huebler wrote, "Reality does *not* lie beneath the surface of appearance...No thing possesses special status in the world: nor does man."¹¹ Huebler's projects, in other words, express a view of reality in which the substance of the world is not organized by structuring meanings but is rather an endless fabric of circumstance, of contingency. The works continued the attack on humanism staged by much of the art of the later 1960s—Mel Bochner, for example, had seen the advent of Minimalism as "the probable end of all Renaissance values"—but they extended that attack into the realm of mimetic representation, using, we might even say, pictures against picturing.¹²

Factualism had precedents across modernism, ranging from Courbet to Pollock and most obviously in the Soviet Factographic photographers, but none of these earlier artists had so insistently refused synthesis. The factographer Osip Brik, for example, wrote that the aim of collecting "individual facts" was precisely to create "a necessary unity," "one spectacular whole." This art of the late 1960s—often studiously undramatic—had no such aim.¹³

Huebler the Idealist

So far, I have been arguing that Huebler's factualist work was marshaled against significance, proposing a mode of representation in which reality (at least in theory) is indifferently and systematically recorded rather than mined for moments of false revelation. I have also briefly suggested that this mode of representation was

meant to correct the erroneously essentialist or idealist history of art and of thought. But such an account is hardly complete. Huebler's work may prefer information to meaning, but it clearly does so absurdly, and, if we are to understand its implications, we need to take a closer look. Let's return to *Variable Piece #4*.

Take first the work's lightly concealed preoccupation with surveillance. If we look again at the shot of the figure with the moustache (an image I characterized earlier as insistently devoid of significance), we notice that the man is looking back unhappily at Huebler, aware of being photographed. Looking a few seconds further, we see that this man is also carrying his own camera. Over his left shoulder stands a figure waiting at the corner, dressed like a cartoon spy: black trench coat, black hat, dark sunglasses, face behind an open newspaper. To pick out and associate such details might seem willful, even abusive, of Huebler's project, but we cannot deny that cameras appear, improbably, in two further images from the group, or that the black-clad man, whenever he is not occluded by others, is always waiting.¹⁴

Then there are the many little contextualizing facts that we can glean from these images. Although the pictures, as in Huebler's other works, are exhibited without regard for the order in which they were shot, an electric sign in a background billboard reveals that photographs in this group were taken at 10:21, 10:22, 10:25, and 10:26 that morning. The temperature, the same readout sometimes reveals, was 35 degrees. These occasional bits of information allow us to also track other developments—the slow movement of one truck in traffic, or the fact that, between 10:21 and 10:26, someone dropped a large, angular object in the trash. These recorded facts are like evidence without a crime, and they set in motion a game of advancing and receding significance. Some details do indeed come forward as salient and telling, but the information they provide fails to pass from data to narrative, from logbook entry to conclusion. (Not seeing that serious play with significance was underway, the critic Robert Hughes complained of another of Huebler's projects, "If some artist shows a clutch of Polaroids of himself playing table tennis, this is called 'information.' But who is informed, and about what?"¹⁵)

Huebler's inclusion of facts that are at once prominent and empty, we might now want to say, is less a straight refusal of meaning than it is a teasing submersion or diffusion of it. The artist knew all along that a purely materialist or factualist description of the world, however attractive it might seem, was impossible.¹⁶ *Variable Piece #4*, after all, announces its own radical partiality: It is only ten pictures. For *Variable Piece #70 (In Process) Global*, his masterwork begun in 1971, Huebler proposed to photograph "everyone alive." He added, however, that he would do so "to the extent of his capacity."¹⁷ Another way to put this is to say that Huebler's works were anyway always models for a total representation rather than instantiations of it. Fragmentary proposals toward such a practice could be delightful and funny, but a truly exhaustive mode of representation—even if it were possible—would be not only useless but also painfully uninteresting. (At one point in *Landscape Manual*, Jeff Wall snaps harshly, as if to himself, "You sitting bored in spite of your leftover notions about 'nothing is really boring at all' fucked all over your dim face—you thought you might turn on the tape recorder & capture a moment of all this, for production later on a concrete wall in a cold parking garage."¹⁸)

More than just unfeasible and potentially dull, these anti-idealist schemes were inevitably still loaded with the qualities they tried to reject. Huebler admitted obliquely at least once to a “lyrical or romantic” quality in his work, and even the photographs in *Variable Piece #4* cannot help but provoke our desire to narrate and hierarchize experience.¹⁹ In one, a young businessman with shaded eyes and a plastic case strides cinematically into the center of the frame. In another, a woman in heels struggles with her suitcase, looking like nothing so much as a character out of Alfred Hitchcock. A third picture shows a pair of old ladies in pillboxes, grimacing openly at the artist, and a fourth (Figure 13.3 at lower left) rhymes the faces of two men from different races and classes, while placing their forms gingerly in contact with that of a woman walking the other way. This last picture looks in the end rather similar to traditional photographic tales of urban intrigue. Taken together, the photographs of *Variable Piece #4* seem, despite themselves, to both demonstrate and indulge our need for organizing, metaphorizing representations of our world. The intriguing dynamics we see in all pictures, even these, may be imposed and erroneous, but they are necessary—indispensable clues for knowing the world.

America, 1968

By now I hope it is clear that Huebler’s work was not so much an assertion of mere fact as it was an inquiry into the very nature of fact, and into the relationships between facts and the world’s various systems of meaning. If we are to understand that inquiry, I think we need to turn, at this rather ambivalent point, to consider the broader cultural context in which this art unfolded. Facts were ubiquitous in America in 1968, and they were under a great deal of pressure—pressure not only because of all the work they were asked to do, but also because of their seams and cracks, the problems that a collective factualist fantasy began to engender. Mary Poovey has written that facts occupy a rather awkward spot somewhere between the world itself and its conceptualization: they are picked out from the fabric of reality and used to build interpretations to which they must themselves appear indifferent.²⁰ I would venture to add that this awkwardness was perhaps never more culturally problematic than in the late 1960s.

Take first the increasingly scientific quality of American culture. The Cold War famously spurred an explosive growth in science and especially in science’s connections to industry and to the state. Furthermore, American public discourse throughout the mid-twentieth century became increasingly smitten with scientific methods and vocabulary. Theodore Porter, for example, has traced this history in his book *Trust in Numbers*, recounting that the US Government required cost-benefit analyses on many public works during the New Deal but that the “massive effort to introduce quantitative criteria for public decisions” came in the 1960s and 1970s.²¹ The ongoing prominence of numerical public opinion research and of the use of statistics in journalism accompanied, in this period, the arrival and widespread popularity of systems theory and information science. At first associated narrowly with figures such as Claude Shannon (no relation to the author) and Norbert Wiener, journalistic ebullience and the work of Marshall McLuhan meant that, by the 1960s,

the vocabulary of *information* was generally endemic to American culture. Facts, as never before, appeared as units, bits to be entered into systems. Indeed, the bit was a new watchword of the day—the catchy abbreviation of the computer’s *binary unit*. Knowledge, historically a spiritual endeavor, was now translatable into numerical code.

The art world was aware of such developments, even preoccupied with them. Jack Burnham curated a show at the Jewish Museum in 1970 called “Software: Information Technology, Its New Meaning for Art” and wrote, in a rather loose enthusiasm for the buzzwords of information theory: “Questions of information’s predictability, improbability, complexity, message structure, dissemination, delay, and distortion are factors not only for consideration, but for a work’s viability as art competing with other art forms.”²² Famously, the Museum of Modern Art presented an exhibition in the same year simply called *Information*. Dozens of artists participated, including Huebler; in the catalogue, each represented his or her work with a single black-and-white page. The aesthetic throughout was one of typewritten data and low-quality photographs.

Artists and critics of the period were mostly quite vague about the nature of their interest in information theory. One topic that Huebler at least seems to have enjoyed toying with was the problem of distinguishing data of potential value from the sheer continuum of information. Such problems had been key to the birth of information theory in the 1940s, since they pertained to code-cracking and surveillance. Military intelligence officers had to be able to distinguish data from static (or “noise” as non-information was called) and to distinguish which points of data were in fact relevant or useful. Huebler would have been especially familiar with these questions, having himself served in Air Combat intelligence in the Pacific during World War II, but they were apparent on some level to just about anyone. The art historian John J. Curley has pointed out that, during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the American public was asked to find evidence of impending Armageddon in what to the amateur eye was a rather indistinct batch of photos.²³ The ability to identify facts, and, further, to identify which ones counted, was a matter of the gravest consequence. Or consider the American preoccupation throughout the sixties with trying to interpret stills from the famed Zapruder film—made exactly five years and one day before *Variable Piece #4*—which seemed forever to hold out the promise of containing significant, telling information about John F. Kennedy’s assassination. (This was a condition in turn expertly allegorized by Michelangelo Antonioni’s 1966 film *Blow-Up*.)

The war in Vietnam was of course another terrain in which fact was contested. First of all there was the frequent eventuality, as in Pentagon body counts, that items presented as facts were simply false—propagandistic fabrications. But more important was the degree to which fact and quantification became the basic stock of the war’s management and public face. The Department of Defense lay in the hands of a former statistics instructor, Robert McNamara, whose previous work included corporate systems-management at Ford. David Halberstam, in his history of the war, has written that Secretary McNamara obsessed over figures and rationality. “His power was facts,” Halberstam writes,

“No one had more.”²⁴ But if McNamara governed the war with facts, he was hardly alone. James William Gibson’s book *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* indicates the degree to which statistical management of facts pervaded every level of American combat:

Producing a high body count was crucial for promotion in the officer corps. Many high-level officers established “production quotas” for their units, and systems of “debit” and “credit” to calculate exactly how efficiently subordinate units and middle-management personnel performed. Different formulas were used, but the commitment to war as a rational production process was common to all... The army’s 25th Infantry Division routinely sponsored a “Best of the Pack” contest for all platoons in the division.... In some other units... credits included enemy body counts, prisoners of war, and U.S. reenlistments. Debits included accidents, courts-martial, sicknesses, and all kinds of disciplinary problems. Credits minus debits equals the index of efficiency.

These figures, Gibson continues, “presented Vietnam as a war managed by rational men basing their decisions on scientific knowledge. Statistics helped to make war-managers appear legitimate to the American public.”²⁵

This legitimacy held together for some time. By the end of the sixties, however, many Americans were calling into question not just the war, but the very system of rationality on which it was managed. And Vietnam was here crowded in by shadows of the Holocaust—its systematic use of data in service of the most inhuman behavior. Of course, the threat of global nuclear destruction, meanwhile, was itself everyday evidence that neutral, calculated rationality could serve as the face of the unconscionable, a horrifying truth made comic in Stanley Kubrick’s 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove*.

By 1959, C. Wright Mills had already warned that postwar rationalization was producing “the man who is ‘with’ rationality but without reason.”²⁶ Very similar notes on rationality were soon struck by Norman O. Brown, Paul Goodman, and Lewis Mumford as well as by many of the period’s activists and critical intellectuals around the world. Many named the problem *the technocracy*, indicating an overarching social decision-making process managed by statistically informed experts, rather than by a public or political process of judgment. One of the period’s most prominent critics of technocracy, Theodore Roszak, in his 1969 book *The Making of a Counter Culture*, wrote that the New Left was fundamentally a reaction against technocracy. Contemporary society, he argued, sought to make its citizens believe that “the vital needs of man are (contrary to everything the great souls of history have told us) purely technical in character.”²⁷

Roszak argued that society had become dangerously preoccupied with the myth of objectivity. Following the sciences, he wrote, “all fields of knowledge (now) strive to become... objective: rigorously, painstakingly objective.” “Science under the technocracy,” he continued, “has become a total culture dominating the lives of millions.... Objectivity as a state of being fills the very air we breathe in a scientific culture; it grips us subliminally in all we say, feel, and do. The mentality of the ideal scientist becomes the very soul of society.”²⁸ Roszak ended his book with

an appendix listing some of the horrifying acts and behaviors perpetrated in the name of objective analysis, among them not only McNamara's press conferences but also the explicit indifference of information theorists to the content of messages conveyed.

Huebler the Scientist

What exactly was Huebler's relationship to this context? He was of course preoccupied by science; his work often seems a bit like the doings of a Big Science research assistant gone off the rails. He said in 1969 that he had sought "expert help" from "the head physicist at Lincoln Labs" for a work requiring calculations of planetary movements, adding, "I wish I had the training that scientists, physicists, and so forth have today." At the same time, Huebler distanced himself from scientific worldviews, adding, "I would like to see scientists and physicists and so forth be a little more playful, too . . . I talked with a lot of them up around Boston and they are really very, very unwilling to think in the rather strange ways that art [does]—to take things seriously the way artists take some of these things seriously."²⁹

Indeed, Huebler was not, in the end, very much like a scientist. He strenuously avoided drawing the inferences and conclusions that are the very purpose of the scientific endeavor, preferring to wallow in information. But his work did mimic several methods of science—and *mimicry* it was: imitation, tinged to varying degrees with mockery. Specifically, it seems to have investigated three imperatives of scientific work: that it be systematic, that it be precise, and that it be randomly or appropriately sampled. Let us briefly consider each.

On the matter of system, Huebler was at once enthusiastic and derisive. When discussing the instructions by which his photo projects were generated, he stressed again and again that the images were triggered by systems, rather than by any human selection or judgment. At the same time, however, Huebler himself admitted, even repeatedly emphasized, that these were what he called "*dumbbell* systems."³⁰ By this I think he must have meant both that his systems were unlikely to glean any information of value and also that his were hardly rigorous systems to begin with, marred as they all were by guesswork and vagueness. Indeed, like other artists of the period, he seems to have relished a *disregard* for system, numbering and naming his works as if they formed a planned series of studies but doing so with little regard to numerical sequence. He often showed a single work with different images in different contexts, sometimes even under different titles and dates. It was important to Huebler that his works be generated by systems, but they had to be failed systems—porous or broken.

The matter of precision was equally interesting to Huebler, and I think it was in this terrain that his work came closest to straightforward critique. The precision Huebler claimed for his methods was patently impossible. In one work made while walking around Amsterdam, for example, he repeatedly halved the time between exposures, claiming eventually to have taken pictures separated by the absurdly impossible span of .0087 seconds. For another, he explains that he exposed a photograph on New Year's Eve, starting an eighth of a second before midnight and ending

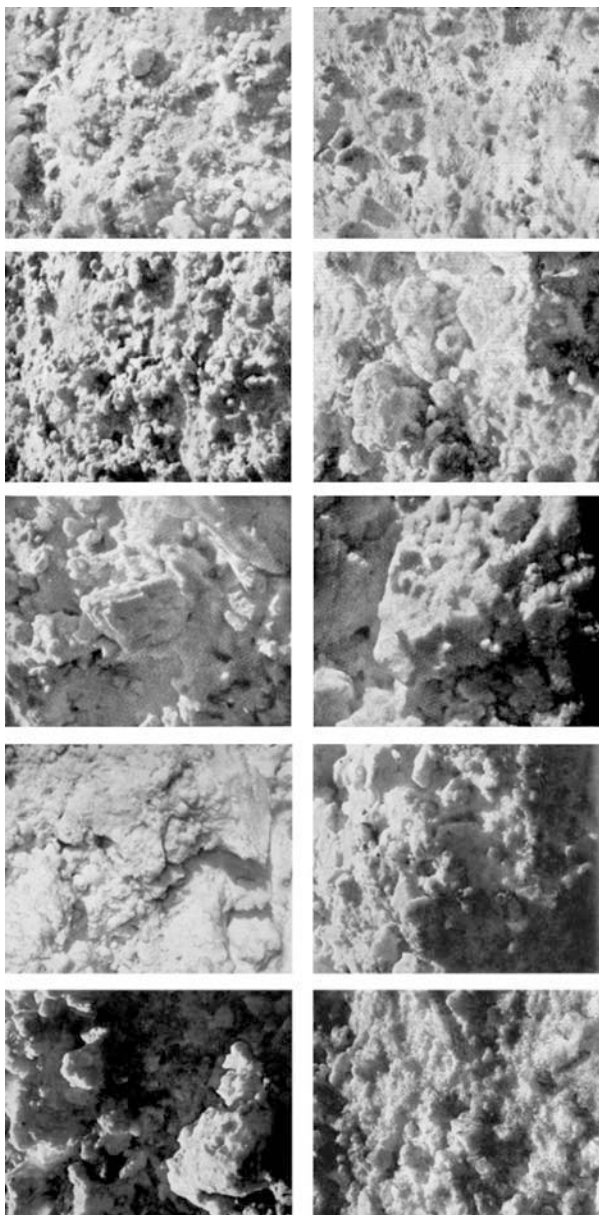


Figure 13.6 Douglas Huebler, *Location Piece #5, Massachusetts-New Hampshire, February, 1969* (details), © 2013 Douglas Huebler, courtesy Darcy Huebler / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

an eighth of a second after. The result, he wrote in his quasi-laboratory style, was a photograph of a woman (nude and smiling) at the instant when “approximately half of her body existed within the old year, 1973, while the other half had entered the new year, 1974.” (Since she was facing south, Huebler further indicated, it was her left side that had entered the new year.) Science’s systems of representation look silly here, aiming madly to complete a description of an incoherent world.³¹

Huebler paid special attention to the matter of random sampling. *Variable Piece #4* had quite literally taken the form of a blind test. Recall, however, that its sample was taken not at regular intervals but rather at the moments when Huebler guessed that people were starting to cross the street. (He lets us know he got it wrong; the group includes a figureless close-up of a truck’s fender.) *Location Piece #9*, the New England landscape work made while driving, was, by comparison, the very picture of rigor: photos were to be made at the moment each mile of driving elapsed. A third work made the same winter explicitly flouted the whole idea of proper sampling. *Location Piece #5, Massachusetts-New Hampshire, February, 1969* (Figure 13.6) carried the following explanatory text:

On February 7, ten photographs were made of snow lying 12 feet from the edge of Interstate Highway 495 in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Each photograph was made at an interval of every 5 miles, or of every 5 yards, or of every 5 feet, or of a variable combination of all those intervals. Ten photographs and this statement constitute the form of this piece.

In an interview the next summer, Huebler talked about this piece, saying, “It could have been, and maybe it was, every five yards, or maybe it was every five feet, or maybe it was every five miles...and I won’t say which it was, really, because it doesn’t matter, you see.”³² Huebler’s constant withdrawal and reproposal of rigorous randomness here—he won’t allow us to believe, for example, that he took pictures every *three* feet—is truly odd and difficult to grasp. I am tempted to agree with his assertion that it doesn’t matter what spatial intervals separate these documents, but that is surely at least partly because the project (artistic in even a strictly Kantian sense) doesn’t have any apparent purpose in the first place.

The feasibility and value of randomness—even the question of what, if anything, really constituted randomness—were real philosophical and research problems in the Cold War period. In 1955, as an aid to disinterested sampling, the RAND corporation published a book (even now in print) called *A Million Random Digits*. The impossibility of true randomness, and the idiosyncrasy of laboring to approach it, were topics in the introduction:

The random digits in this book were produced by a rerandomization of a basic table generated by an electronic roulette wheel. Briefly, a random frequency pulse source, providing on the average about 100,000 pulses per second, was gated about once per second... The machine was a 32-place roulette wheel which made, on the average, about 3000 revolutions per trial and produced one number per second. A binary-to-decimal converter was used which converted 20 of the 32 numbers (the other twelve were discarded).³³

A little later, the editors admitted:

The engineers had to make several modifications and refinements of the circuits before production of apparently satisfactory numbers was achieved... Block 1 was produced immediately after a careful tune-up of the machine... Apparently the machine had been running down.³⁴

Then the editors wrote about preparation for publication: "Because of the very nature of the tables, it did not seem necessary to proofread every page of the final manuscript, ... [but] every twentieth page was proofread."³⁵ This elixir of system and improvisation is pure Huebler—the artist could just about have written the book's introduction himself. Consider the instructions to the user:

In any use of the table, one should first find a random starting position. A common procedure for doing this is to open the book to an unselected page of the digit table and blindly choose a five-digit number... [That figure can then be used as the line number for digits to be chosen, but,] to guard against the tendency of books to open repeatedly at the same page and the natural tendency of a person to choose a number toward the center of a page, every five-digit number used to determine a starting position should be marked and not used a second time for this purpose.³⁶

After months of high-tech work and tinkering, the choice of digits came down to closing one's eyes and flipping the book open. The similarity of RAND's unintentionally comic language to the tone of Huebler's art is telling. Randomness is an effort, and the combination of the casually personal with the statistically rigorous was endemic to science, too. What Huebler studiously represents, even enjoys, is the absurdity at the base of the indispensable ideal of objectivity.

Conclusion

Let us return to those photographs of roadside snow. I think the artist leaves us in some doubt as to how to approach them—whether to regard these images as peripheral support to the joke or instead to really look. And if we do choose to look at them, how do we do so? Are they like models in some kind of meteorological atlas, demonstrating the variety of textures that snow takes, or, more absurdly, the various forms that it clots into when plowed? Or are these a series of modernist visual essays that reveal to us the meanings everywhere just hiding in the world—the ways in which nature is already loaded with feelings of barrenness, for example, or of diversity paired with sameness, or of stiffness paired with fragility? Certainly, Huebler showed little apparent regard for the fineness of his prints, but we cannot deny that given a chance, the photographs are, despite his claims to the contrary, *interesting*.

Here I think we are in the area where Huebler's various investigations of surveillance, objectivity, enumeration, precision, randomness, and so on, come together. These notions all huddle around the problem of *significance*, surely Huebler's master concern. Science and other inferential practices (including, incidentally, most art)

share the imperative to make determinations about what will count—what will be measured, and from among those measured things, what will be deemed worthy of attention. To proceed, such practices must step over the impossibility of making these selections in a perfectly judicious way. What I think Huebler and his factualist compatriots most doubted was the legitimacy of this work, of significance itself. Not that these artists thought life was without meaning—Huebler, for one, was clearly having a ball—but they seem to have wanted to hold onto the fact that any ordering of that meaning, any hierarchy of ideas was, even if necessary and inevitable, always false.

It seems to me that Western culture in general around 1968 grappled with the possibility (itself an endpoint of several centuries of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought) that the world had no intrinsic, unifying order, religious or otherwise. To describe the world responsibly, then, was to reject both religion and humanism for sheer reliance on facts—and even those were highly suspect. I would venture to add that this frightening prospect is one from which we, as a globe, have recoiled, without, however, having found any satisfying means for attempting a general description of things. For most of the Cold War period, a liberal consensus prevailed in much of the West; if it was officially secular, it nevertheless held to truths. In the years after the upheavals of 1968, this consensus eroded. Ours is a world in which the only comprehensive views are a marginalized Marxist totality and various ascendant brands of reactionary religion offered precisely as tonic against nihilism. Of course, I am hardly blaming Huebler for this condition; I think he was trying, despite infinite disorder, to find a strategy of affirmation. But I think that, at the very least, the predicament of much contemporary visual art—that it has retreated to primarily subjective claims—is a symptom of a condition that Huebler and the factualists were trying playfully to work their way out of.

I want to end, then, not with an image by Huebler, but by returning to that stunning pencil drawing by Vija Celmins (Figure 13.2). *Untitled (Ocean)* lacks dramatic weather, lacks indeed anything that could be understood as even the slightest kind of incident. It rejects all previous seascapes as willfully, irresponsibly moody, but it nevertheless painstakingly copies each ripple of water in pencil—as if maybe, by sheer dint of effort, something significant might still be discovered there, as if all that surface might in fact be concealing a rich and valuable depth.

Notes

*An earlier, shorter version of this chapter appeared under the title “Uninteresting Pictures: Photography and Fact at the End of the 1960s” in Matthew Witkovsky, ed., *Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1965–1977*, ex. cat. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, 88–97. It is published here with kind permission of the Art Institute of Chicago and Yale University Press.

1. In its entirety, the text reads: “Variable Piece #4/New York City/On November 23, 1968 ten photographs were made with the camera pointed west on 42nd Street in New York City./With his eyes completely closed the photographer sat on the corner of Vanderbilt Avenue: each photograph was made at the instant that the sound of traffic approaching 42nd Street stopped enough to suggest that pedestrians could cross the street./This

- statement and the ten photographs join together to constitute the form of the piece./ November, 1968 Douglas Huebler.”
2. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “From the Aesthetics of Administration to Institutional Critique: Some Aspects of Conceptual Art, 1962–1969,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105–143.
 3. Ed Ruscha quoted in John Coplans, “Concerning ‘Various Small Fires’: Edward Ruscha Discusses His Perplexing Publications,” *Artforum* 5 (February 1965), 25. The publication of quotation marks around the word *facts* suggests that Ruscha knew that this model of his photography’s indifference was overly tidy; Gerhard Richter, “Interview with Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 1986,” in *Gerhard Richter, The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings 1962–1993* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 165.
 4. Jeff Wall, *Landscape Manual* (Fine Arts Gallery, University of British Columbia, 1970), 1, 44 (italics original).
 5. Douglas Huebler, interview by Patricia Norvell, July 25, 1969, in *Recording Conceptual Art*, ed. Patricia Norvell and Alexander Alberro (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 140 (regarding specifically *Location Piece #5, Massachusetts-New Hampshire, February, 1969*); *Douglas Huebler: Location Pieces, Site Sculpture, Duration Works, Drawings, Variable Pieces*, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 1972), np (regarding his work in general).
 6. This last shot appears to have been made an hour early.
 7. Andy Grundberg, “Photography View: Stieglitz Felt the Pull of Two Cultures,” review of *Alfred Stieglitz* (National Gallery of Art, February 3–May 8, 1983), *New York Times*, February 13, 1983.
 8. Berenice Abbott, quoted in John Tagg, “The Currency of the Photograph,” in *Thinking Photography*, ed. Victor Burgin (London: Macmillan, 1982), 111.
 9. Douglas Huebler, quoted in Lucy Lippard, “Douglas Huebler: Everything about Everything,” *Art News* 71 (December 1972): 30; Huebler, interview (*Recording Conceptual Art*), 140; Huebler, artist’s statement for Seth Siegelaub’s exhibition *January 5–31, 1969*, as quoted in *Conceptual Art*, comp. Ursula Meyer (E. P. Dutton, 1972), 137.
 10. Text of *Location Piece #6, National, June 4, 1970*; text of *Location Piece #2A, New York City–Seattle, Washington, July, 1969*.
 11. Huebler, interview (*Recording Conceptual Art*), 142; *Douglas Huebler* (Boston, 1972), np.
 12. Mel Bochner, quoted in Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art, Art and Ideas* (London and New York: Phaidon, 1998), 111.
 13. Osip Brik, quoted in Leah Dickerman, “The Fact and the Photograph,” *October* 118 (Fall 2006): 143.
 14. That such details appeared underscoring the theme of photographic observation might have been blind luck. After looking closely for well over two hours at the original prints, with help from two other viewers, I still feel unsure whether Huebler in fact made these images according to the random principles he claims to have followed. I wonder, too, whether he might not have shot a whole roll, from which he selected these ten.
 15. Robert Hughes, “The Decline and Fall of the Avant-Garde,” in *Idea Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973), 193; (orig. *Time*, Dec. 18, 1972). Hughes is evoking here *Variable Piece #46, Bradford, Massachusetts, February, 1971* and the Museum of Modern Art’s 1970 exhibition *Information*.
 16. *Variable Piece #4* may work against traditional hierarchies of meaning, but Huebler’s description makes clear—although he refuses to say so directly—that he shot these pictures just in front of Grand Central Station, the symbolic heart of New York.

17. The result would be “the most authentic and inclusive representation of the human species that may be assembled in that manner”; the last clause of course thoroughly undermines the apparent claims of the project.
18. Wall, *Landscape Manual*, 40.
19. Huebler, interview (*Recording Conceptual Art*), 140.
20. Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1998), 9.
21. Theodore Porter, *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 198.
22. Jack Burnham, “Alice’s Head: Reflection on Conceptual Art,” *Artforum* February 1970, 43.
23. John J. Curley, *A Conspiracy of Images: Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter, and the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 9–11.
24. David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972), 234.
25. James Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), 112–113, 124.
26. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 169.
27. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), 10.
28. Roszak, 209, 216.
29. Huebler, interview (*Recording Conceptual Art*), 151.
30. See, for example, Huebler, interview (*Recording Conceptual Art*), 148.
31. These works are *Duration Piece #5, Amsterdam, Holland, January, 1970* and *Duration Piece #31, Boston, January, 1974*. Mark Godfrey has rightly pointed out that, in Huebler’s works, “[T]he language of specificity and scientific precision is pushed to parody.” See Mark Godfrey, *Douglas Huebler*, exh. cat. (London: Camden Arts Centre, 2002), 6.
32. Huebler, interview (*Recording Conceptual Art*), 140.
33. RAND Corporation, *A Million Random Digits with 100,000 Normal Deviates* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1955), xi.
34. RAND Corporation, *A Million Random Digits*, xii.
35. RAND Corporation, *A Million Random Digits*, xii.
36. RAND Corporation, *A Million Random Digits*, xxii–xxiii.

CHAPTER 14

1968 and the Future of Information

Andrew Lison

To consider the global protests of 1968 from the perspective of the present, especially in view of the particular intersections of media and counterculture that gave them their distinctive flavor, is of necessity to consider contemporary issues. This is true not only due to a recently renewed focus on democratic participation precipitated by developments such as Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring on the one hand and a growing awareness of the proliferation of digital surveillance on the other, but, more fundamentally, because processes of informational convergence in that nominally analog moment can tell us much about our current, digital age. Indeed, more recent studies focusing on the development of computing and networks from the 1960s onward highlight contiguities between bureaucratic forces of establishment control and the countercultural movements that once sought to oppose them.¹ Such studies rightfully emphasize the links between the countercultural and technological *milieux*, usually noting the connections between California hippie scenes and the rising high-tech industry of Silicon Valley. Similarly, the cultural backdrop of Southern California and the products of its attendant entertainment industry also have the power to elucidate aspects of this broader symbiotic relationship. This chapter examines two such instances: the 1967 Hollywood film *The President's Analyst*, directed by Theodore J. Flicker, and the career of experimental composer Joseph Byrd from the early 1960s through 1968, including the 1968 self-titled LP by his Los Angeles avant-rock group The United States of America. In doing so, it explores the ways in which cybernetics and information theory, the intellectual underpinnings of a rising, multimediatic technoculture, were also a conditioning factor for countercultural and poststructuralist critiques originating in the still-analog sounds, words, and visions of the late 1960s.

The President's Analyst's dark satire, coming on the eve of the protests of 1968, eerily anticipates both the global nature of these protests as well as their eventual subsumption under a new, technocratic regime in the monolithic figure of the film's

ultimate villain, “The Phone Company.” It thus signals the way in which the explosions of disparity characteristic of the protests of the 1960s could be, and were, reabsorbed under a looser but simultaneously more totalizing rubric. Furthermore, it reaffirms how the stirrings of a shift in power from national bureaucracies to a more elusive, global, and technological bureaucracy operate as the flipside to countercultural rebellions against established orthodoxies in both the East and West. To understand the ramifications of this shift, both the emerging technological discourses of the postwar period as well as responses formulated by poststructuralist thinkers mobilized alongside the New Left—intriguingly stemming, given the film’s own staging of an encounter between a psychoanalyst and the telecommunications industry, from those of Jacques Lacan—become key. Indeed, the conceptualization by which an expanded channel for expression could be delineated, via information theory, while simultaneously foreclosing certain types of critique can be further elucidated through the poststructuralist notion of “free play,” which contributed to the sense of this vast, yet limited channel as truly infinite.

The case of Joseph Byrd and the avant-rock group he led, The United States of America, proves particularly illustrative in this regard. Following Byrd’s work in the Fluxus-affiliated New York art and composition scene of the early 1960s and his subsequent move to Los Angeles, the USA’s attempt to articulate an anticapitalist critique of American culture via a similarly diverse combination of analog synthesizers, compositional music, and 1960s rock demonstrates a paradox at the heart of the crossover between experimental, countercultural, and popular aesthetic practices of the time: What seemed to be newly unfettered avenues for artistic expression nonetheless proved inadequate for effectively transmitting their radical message. That, over the period between the protests of 1968 and the present day, this “limitless” channel of potential expression has only further proliferated—indeed, to the point of incorporating previously distinct types of audiovisual media—as a result of its continuing reduction to a digital schema of binary opposition between 1 and 0 is nothing but the tragic sublimation of the persistent opposition between capitalism and communism into a multiplicity of *soi disant* radical political positions, what Marxist theorist Fredric Jameson describes as “the emergence of all kinds of ‘new social movements’ and subject-positions into an immensely expanded media space” alongside “the theoretical disintegration of labor theories of value in the face of information bits,”² recapitulated as farce. Nevertheless, one of Byrd’s scores from the same period, *The Defense of the American Continent from the Viet-Cong Invasion*, particularly as it is presented in a 1969 collection of graphical notation put together by John Cage, can be seen as pushing the correspondences between experimental composition and the nascent practice of computer programming past their limits, thus potentially indicating a way of moving beyond this background of so much information and toward the kind of action that it has increasingly forestalled.

Everybody Hates The Phone Company

In *The President’s Analyst*, James Coburn plays a New York psychoanalyst, Dr. Sidney Schaefer, who is recruited to be the personal therapist to the president of the United States. What at first seems to be an ideal opportunity quickly turns

into an oppressive simulacrum of the life of a prestigious analyst given the demands of the job, which include being forbidden from spending the night with his girlfriend because of his tendency to spill secrets in his sleep and being continuously on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, engendering in him a creeping feeling that he is being surveilled at all times. His own sense of mental well-being slipping away from him, Schaefer absconds from his position, setting off an international manhunt as various world powers compete to gain access to the secrets of the president's mind. The film thus not only obliquely echoes the protests in favor of mixed-gender cohabitation at French universities sometimes cited as precursors to the events of May 1968, it anticipates the social conditions that would come to replace the entrenched hierarchy against which those protests and their successors in the worldwide movements of 1968 were directed. In this sense, the notion that one's activities are continually being tracked and registered, by now only too familiar to those living and working within a largely digital, informational economy, is remarkable for its time, anticipating what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, building on Maurizio Lazzarato, call "immaterial labor."³ For them, such labor is characteristic of a mode of production where the boundaries between work and leisure are continually blurred and value is intimately tied to a kind of symbolic and affective manipulation rather similar to, if frequently less intense than, the work of taking the "most powerful man in the world" as an analysand. What is perhaps most striking about Schaefer's attempt to opt out from these conditions, however, is the coordination with which the seemingly disparate elements aligned against him operate.

In an emblematic scene, in order to flush out those who have supposedly put him under surveillance he makes an abrupt move in a bar only to find the entire establishment, including the staff, various patrons of different ethnicities, and even his own girlfriend, drawing their guns—a visual analogon of Althusserian overtermination ultimately coalescing "in the last instance"⁴ around a single function. While this scene is immediately revealed to have been a nightmare, following the logic of late-capitalist paranoia this revelation is *itself* promptly undercut by the disclosure to the audience that, within the diegetic world of the film, his girlfriend really *is* a secret agent. Furthermore, upon running away, Schaefer really *is* pursued by every possible foreign intelligence service, not to mention both the foreign and domestic American agencies (the "CEA" and "FBR," respectively). In other words, while Schaefer may or may not be paranoid, everyone really *is* out to get him. This expression of a kind of unity through diversity, an array of increasingly diffuse and disparate elements that nevertheless somehow align themselves toward a common tendency, is not separate from the issue of the ever-expanding demands of symbolic labor. Rather, both elements are in fact key to understanding the socioeconomic shifts that became newly visible in the late 1960s, changes that would come to a head in the globally tumultuous year of 1968 and whose aftereffects, positive and negative, remain with us today.⁵

Indeed, *The President's Analyst* goes so far as to incorporate the era's rising counterculture into its narrative, one of many aspects of the film that somehow manages to be simultaneously timely and prescient. Schaefer is not only continuously on call, but once he escapes he takes refuge with a hippie band, briefly enjoying a countercultural lifestyle as a means of hiding from the assorted intelligence agencies on his

trail, until he is kidnapped by their friends, another, British Invasion style group called “The Puddlians,” who turn out to be made up entirely of Canadian secret service agents. This overlap between counterculture and establishment is a microcosm of the process the film reproduces on a geopolitical scale: a conflation of that previously Manichean antagonism, the Cold War opposition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviet agent, Kropotkin, and Masters, his American CEA counterpart, turn out to be remarkably familiar with and sympathetic to one another, even making a friendly bet on who will catch Schaefer first. Kropotkin subsequently rescues Schaefer from the Puddlians’ boat (and the FBR agents who, less sympathetic than the CEA, are about to kill him, having already done away with the Puddlians) and attempts to convince him to return peacefully with him to Moscow. In doing so, Kropotkin does not, however, appeal to any ideological superiority but merely Schaefer’s self-interest:

Logic is on our side: this isn’t a case of a world struggle between two divergent ideologies or different economic systems. Every day, your country becomes more socialistic, my country becomes more capitalistic. Pretty soon we’ll meet in the middle and join hands. No, my dear doctor, you’re going to defect because you want to live.

If what Kropotkin says in many ways foretells the refashioning of bourgeois nation-state and state communist practices that would come to define the neoliberal turn, Schaefer himself foreshadows the ultimate status of this turn as a capitalist one, extricating himself from this situation by means of that most bourgeois of sciences: analyzing the relationship between Kropotkin and his father, a senior Soviet spy. In doing so, he manages to reverse this appeal to self-interest, convincing Kropotkin that they should both in fact remain in the *West* in order to proceed with his analysis. Ultimately, then, it is *Kropotkin* who “defects” because he wants to live—in the sense of living his life to the fullest.⁶

This refashioning of Cold War difference as less antagonistic echoes Jameson’s observations, in the wake of its collapse, on the gradual incorporation of the Soviet Union into an emerging global economic system during the Brezhnev era. He highlights especially “the enthusiasm with which the Soviet leaders of the ‘period of stagnation’ sought to attach themselves ever more closely to the emergent new world system, in part in order to borrow heavily and to consume ever more of the West’s attractive (and essentially high-tech and communicational or informational) products,”⁷ a move auguring the USSR’s ultimate collapse and capitulation to the so-called “new world order” of global capitalism in the early 1990s. Logic, in other words, was on “*our*” side. Antagonistics thus start to give way to agonistics as formerly mortal enemies begin to assume positions based not upon annihilation but rather polemical opposition, a formulation that French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, writing a decade later, would argue is fundamental to the free legitimation of scientific knowledge in a postmodern society. This legitimation, he writes, “has nothing to do with maximized performance, but has as its basis difference understood as parody.”⁸ Such moves away from antagonism have everything to do with the rise of the high-tech communicational and informational milieu that the

film ultimately depicts; for Lyotard, the fundamental choice facing a postmodern information society is not between communism and capitalism, but between a non-teleological unfolding of agonistic, paralogical language games based on unfettered access to information and utter subjugation to a terroristic, technocratic system ruthlessly innovating its way to maximum efficiency.

This move away from antagonism, as well as the new dangers it brings with it, also resonates with Hannah Arendt's rumination, immediately following the tumultuous events of 1968, on the scientific and intellectual elite, "For better or worse—and I think there is every reason to be fearful as well as hopeful—the really new and potentially revolutionary class,"⁹ supplanting both proletariat and bourgeoisie. For Arendt, the exercise of violence stands in stark opposition to the exercise of power, as the truly powerful have no need to resort to violence. She thus feared that, like the existing power structures only then starting to lose their influence (i.e., beginning to resort to violence), the kind of power a rising technocratic class might exert could eventually be even stronger, "perhaps too great for the good of mankind," fostering new antagonisms from the masses left behind by their "meritocracy" and leading to new cycles of violence and tyranny.¹⁰ Thus, both Lyotard and Arendt acknowledge, in different ways, the potential for danger inherent in a technocratic society, but their conceptions also highlight the potential of science and technology to operate at a level above and beyond older, entrenched antagonisms. Although skeptical of their Western iterations especially, Arendt's description of the contemporaneous countercultural protests in both the East and West nevertheless draws out a similar aversion to established interests:

The crucial feature in the student rebellions around the world is that they are directed everywhere against the ruling bureaucracy. This explains what at first glance seems so disturbing—that the rebellions in the East demand precisely those freedoms of speech and thought that the young rebels in the West say they despise as irrelevant.¹¹

Given the hopes invested in the power of science and technology to break out of older class conflicts and global antagonisms, however, the contiguity between these aging ruling bureaucracies and the nascent digitally driven mode of organization has—at least until the dot-com boom of the 1990s brought it back into focus—often been overlooked. Even for Jameson, who has considered this relationship carefully, and who furthermore accurately assesses the gradual relaxation of Soviet economic isolationism as one indicator of the new era of global capitalism he has so frequently and insightfully analyzed, the metaphor of choice is that of pressure systems, the stresses of the world market expanding into newly unsealed territories, rather than a more interactive association between the two, because "systemic interrelationship is a two-way street, and many are the cybernetic images of what you lay yourself open to when you link up to an external network."¹² As Schaefer's psychoanalytic reversal of Kropotkin's argument suggests, the end result is indeed a heightened, neoliberal stage of capitalism and not some stranger synthesis with communism (let alone a revolution). Yet Arendt's conjectures on the rising technocracy and her observation regarding the symmetrical relationship between the Eastern and Western student

movements of 1968, especially when viewed alongside Kropotkin's similar assertions about the East and West more generally, suggest that metaphors of cybernetic feedback are precisely the privileged points of reference for this transition on the world stage from national and ideological antagonisms to technocratic agonistics.

Cybernetics is a scientific discipline, invented by the American mathematician Norbert Wiener during and immediately after the Second World War, which asserts that truly effective control can only take place if the controller is able to receive communicative feedback on the state of the commands it sends from the person or thing being controlled.¹³ A cybernetic systemic interrelationship is thus indeed a two-way street, but this by no means posits an equal relationship between its termini. Nevertheless, Wiener, anticipating Lyotard, emphasized an Augustinian outlook in which the scientist encounters nature as objectively uncaring over a Manichean, antagonistic one in which nature appears as willfully malicious.¹⁴ Cybernetics itself derives from κυβερνήτης, "*kubernētēs*, or 'steersman,' the same Greek word from which we eventually derive our word 'governor.'"¹⁵ In contradistinction to (the) government, the notion of *governance* at the core of the technical considerations of communication preoccupying Western mathematicians and scientists of the post-war era enables more distributed forms of control such as Alexander Galloway's concept of "*protocol... a type of controlling logic that operates outside institutional, governmental, and corporate power*, although it has important ties to all three."¹⁶ Protocol, he argues, is key to the rise of contemporary communications networks, most notably the Internet, with its "roots in the American academic and military culture of the 1950s and 1960s."¹⁷ Similar concerns of governance also form the persistent bureaucratic–technocratic link between such seemingly disparate aspects of late-1960s' Cold War culture as the refashioning of geopolitical (ant)agonisms, the common political interests finding expression from opposite standpoints in countercultural protests on both sides of the Iron Curtain, the Soviet Bloc's newfound interest in Western communicational commodities, and the incipient emergence of a newly global form of capitalism.

All of which is to suggest, returning to *The President's Analyst*, that it should come as no surprise when, after Kropotkin and Schaefer return to land and unsuccessfully attempt to place a call from a phone booth conspicuously located in the middle of nowhere, the following conversation marks a decisive turn in the film's direction:

Schaefer: You know, the one thing that I've learned from my patients, they all hate the phone company. You see, it's interesting, even the *stockholders* of the phone company hate the phone company.

Kropotkin: I know. *Bedouins* hate the phone company. Matter of fact, I've never been in a country where everybody didn't hate the phone company.

The film's true villain, of course, turns out not to be any or even all of the various world governments arrayed against Schaefer, but instead The Phone Company, a gigantic corporation situated somewhere between the American and the global, aiming to replace their costly outlay of fixed capital in landline telephones and cross-bar switches with wireless devices called "Cerebrum Communicators." Embedded

directly into the brains of the populace, these communicators would then allow instant, proto-protocological communication with anyone in the world similarly equipped. At this early stage in the transition from government to governance, such a scheme apparently still requires not only corporate direction but the approval of the president of the United States, hence their interest in Schaefer. Yet, at the same time, the global stakes are clear; as Schaefer tells Kropotkin and Masters, now teamed up to rescue him, they have to stop The Phone Company because “not only America but the whole world depends on what we do here right now.” While they successfully thwart the plan in the short term, the film ominously concludes with Schaefer, his girlfriend, Kropotkin, and Masters celebrating Christmas together while robotic TPC executives look on via surveillance feed, all to the tune of “Joy to the World.”

That a relatively minor Hollywood comedy should somehow end up formulating what is possibly one of the most cohesive and farsighted assessments of its own moment, signaling the inevitable rise of a supranational capitalist network predicated upon information technology, is perhaps less surprising in light of the theories initially formulated by Wiener nearly 20 years before, as well as Arendt’s roughly contemporaneous analysis.¹⁸ Yet the widespread use of portable communications technology today, supported by private telecommunications networks, nevertheless stands as a testament to the prescient nature of the film’s satirical appraisal. Given the prognostic value of a film like *The President’s Analyst*, then, what can be said about its significance for its own time and, in particular, its relevance to the protest movements of 1968? The film depicts, nearly contemporaneously with a spate of worldwide protests against entrenched national bureaucracies, the way in which these opposing forces could both be subsumed under a more expansive, cybernetic mode of organization. With the Puddlians, its rock group spies who manage to grab Schaefer by spiking the punch at a concert with LSD, it sets the ground for what it could nevertheless not fully predict at the time: that the extra-institutional power of protocol would eventually be developed not by robotic (phone) company men, but a mixture of technocratic and countercultural forces. As Fred Turner notes, “Like Norbert Wiener two decades earlier, many in the counterculture saw in cybernetics a vision of a world built not around vertical hierarchies and top-down flows of power, but around looping circuits of energy and information.”¹⁹ Indeed, for Lyotard, a new relationship between the establishment and those marginalized by or opposed to it is in fact crucial to the understanding of human rights in an efficiency-driven postmodern society: “Rights do not flow from hardship, but from the fact that the alleviation of hardship improves the system’s performance.”²⁰ Even in his preferred paralogical model, however, the two become intertwined. In its social application, Lyotard’s “pragmatics of science” is neither “an essential component for the subset of decision makers, who force on society the performance criterion they reject for themselves,” in which case it might correspond to something like innovation, nor is it the opposite, “a refusal to cooperate with the authorities, a move in the direction of counterculture”²¹ (although it is closer to the latter), but rather “[a] recognition of the heteromorphous nature of language games,”²² their irreconcilable multiplicity, along with agreements—albeit transient and tactical—between opposing sides; agreements, in other words, on how to disagree: “[T]he principle that any consensus on the rules defining a game and the ‘moves’ playable within it *must* be...agreed

on by its present players and subject to eventual cancellation.”²³ Less a supersession than a collapse of the distinction between bureaucracy and protest, this development mirrors the postmodern effacement of the distinction between high and low culture, amply corroborated in this instance by the prescient critique nestled within the screwball comedy of *The President’s Analyst*.

Seemings and Meanings

Considered alongside this collapse of binary distinctions, it is notable not only that the film’s antagonist is a technocratic corporation with global designs, but also that its protagonist is a psychoanalyst. Indeed, the collapse of binary distinctions is itself key to poststructuralist theories of the construction of meaning from the mid-1960s onward, finding an important touchstone in the rethinking of psychoanalysis, not only through structural linguistics but cybernetics itself, carried out by French thinker Jacques Lacan. A key epistemological condition for poststructuralist considerations of signification is an understanding of meaning based not simply upon opposition, as in the common understanding of Saussurean linguistics, but rather the “free play” of the signifier. As Jean-Pierre Dupuy writes of both structuralism and poststructuralism, “In the interest of showing... that, far from mastering language, it is language that masters man, and that ‘symbolic order’ is irreducible to human experience, it was the vocabulary of cybernetics and information theory that they systematically drew upon. The most typical case was that of Jacques Lacan... Later the new literary criticism, caught up in its turn by the excitement of detecting the autonomy of signifiers and their infinite drift, was to display great dexterity in operating various types of ‘textual machines,’ desiring or other.”²⁴ Although Dupuy traces this “informational” influence on French thought back to structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and his notion of unconscious “‘symbolic thought’ being structured in the way that language is structured,”²⁵ as he also notes, it is in Lacan that this influence finds an exemplar. Indeed, it is the poststructuralist glimmerings in Lacan’s mid-1950s thought that situate an emancipation of meaning within the trajectory of free play which, enabled by the liberation of desire, would eventually become associated with the liberatory goals of May 1968.

As such, poststructuralism constitutes a key link between cybernetics, information theory, and the counterculture. In Lacan’s work in this period, however, the seeds of this notion operate in a somewhat different manner, one aligned more closely with binary schemas. For Lacan, meaning is an effect of both language as system *and* the subjective desire of the speaker. Importantly, however, subjective desire does not operate *beyond* linguistic constraints, but constitutes a second level of determination that follows after a more fundamental determination instantiated by the symbolic order itself. In perhaps his most famous lecture on cybernetics, from 1955, he states, “[I]t is... not entirely rigorous to say that it is human desire which, all by itself, introduces meaning... The foundation of the system is already in play. How could it be established if it didn’t rest on the notion of chance, that is to say on a certain pure anticipation, which already has a meaning?”²⁶ As John Johnston points out, Lacan elucidated the nature of this probabilistic anticipation in an earlier

lecture by the use of a system based only on the symbols + and –, equivalent to a binary system of ones and zeros: “even these simple series of pluses and minuses, which initially may be random, indicate how only certain orderings or sequences of integrations are possible. Constituting a rudimentary syntax, they inscribe a form of memory that operates with the force of a ‘law.’”²⁷ It thus makes a certain kind of sense that Schaefer, as a psychiatrist who has worked himself up to the level of analyzing the president (in a sense the most powerful subject), should eventually find himself face to face, in the form of The Phone Company, with representatives of the incipient digital order itself.

As with Lévi-Strauss, Lacan’s methodology is in many ways an elaboration of not only cybernetics but the mathematical model of information theory formulated in a 1948 paper by Claude Shannon—working in the research wing of the really-existing Phone Company, Bell Labs—and subsequently popularized in conjunction with Warren Weaver’s less mathematical discussion of it. As does Shannon, Weaver, too, considers the subjective relationship of interpretation between the sender and receiver, “the semantic problem,” as secondary, although he does note its relevance for Cold War antagonistics: “The semantic problem has wide ramifications if one thinks of communication in general. Consider, for example, the meaning to a Russian of a U.S. newsreel picture.”²⁸ Nevertheless, he writes, analyses of semantics, as well as those of the effectivity of the message (what Wiener might term cybernetic control), “can make use only of those signal accuracies which turn out to be possible when analyzed at Level A,”²⁹ the level of information, for which, as Shannon and Weaver both demonstrate, the binary form is well suited. For them, “*information* must not be confused with meaning... information is a measure of one’s freedom of choice when one selects a message... The concept of information applies not to the individual messages (as the concept of meaning would), but rather to the situation as a whole.”³⁰ Consequently, as Tiziana Terranova notes in her insightful consideration of information theory, “The postmodern lesson on the cultural politics of information is that meaning has evaporated as the main point of reference within the scene of communication. Or, in a different way, information can be understood to involve a larger spectrum than meaning.”³¹ As but one such understanding of this enlarged spectrum, we might consider how, even in advance of its influence on French theory, information theory effectively supplants the concept of information as meaning with a consideration of information as a *multiplicity* of meanings, or, as Terranova puts it, “the milieu which supports and encloses the production of meaning.”³²

For Lacan, who carefully considered such implications in relation to his own approach to psychoanalysis, the move from qualitative, subjective semantics to quantitative, objective measurements of information also raised the question of a shift from antagonistics to agonistics.³³ Invoking the comparably systems-oriented realm of game theory, he asks, in games of chance such as “war itself, considered in its aspect as a game, detached from anything which might be real... [d]oes man make a call on something, does he look for something... whose semantic homophony shows that it must have some relation with intersubjectivity, even though in the game of chance it seems to have been eliminated?”³⁴ This question, too, comes down to the

primacy of the symbolic (what Weaver calls level A, the technical problem), over the level of the imaginary (the semantic problem, or level B, in information theory):

The issue is to know whether the symbolic exists as such, or whether the symbolic is simply the fantasy of the second degree of the imaginary coaptations. This is where there is a choice between the two orientations of analysis . . . Is it a matter, in analysis, of a coaptation of these fundamental images, of a rectification, of a normalization in terms of the imaginary, or of a liberation of meaning in the discourse, in this continuation of the universal discourse in which the subject is engaged?³⁵

Lacan's psychoanalytic project is based upon this latter orientation, aligned with the existence of the symbolic "as such": the liberation of meaning, or significance, from a fixed position within a system. In this sense, the "universal discourse" of the symbolic represents the limit of meaning-making, a level at which "the chain of possible combinations of the encounter can be studied as such, as an order which subsists in its rigour, independently of all subjectivity,"³⁶ beyond which lies the real, that which, famously, "resists symbolisation absolutely."³⁷ While the goal of analysis could never be said to reside in the *elimination* of subjective desire, for Lacan an acknowledgment of the fundamentally *arbitrary* nature of human desire's second-order restriction (over and beyond that instantiated by the symbolic order itself) becomes a key factor in the analyst–analysand relationship. *The President's Analyst's* ominously "happy" ending thus represents something of an analytical failure and, indeed, in some sense a return to what Lacan describes as the contrasting orientation, a "normalization in terms of the imaginary" most likely aligned with American-style ego psychology: ignorance of informational dominance as the enabling condition for a happy life.

However, as Lacan's explication suggests, even the most radical untethering of human desire would leave in place the limitations instantiated by the symbolic, informational order as such, for which binary stands as the minimal example. Yet acknowledgment of these limitations is not only repressed by the protagonists at the end of *The President's Analyst* but also minimized—even as they are pursued—in subsequent French poststructuralist discourse on the liberation of significance.³⁸ Despite Lacan's early focus on the "universal discourse" of the symbolic, later poststructuralism, building on structural analysis while at the same time rebuking it for an overarching reductionism and essentialism, would emphasize the notion of "free play" despite or even over its grounding in "the system's foundation." Jacques Derrida's 1966 paper "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," perhaps the most well-known example of this development, explicitly describes play within a bounded symbolic field as nonetheless infinite: "If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field—that is, language and a finite language—excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite."³⁹ By the time that Roland Barthes, another key figure in the shift from structuralism to poststructuralism, would republish his foundational collection of structural semiotic analyses from the 1950s, *Mythologies*, a few years later, such antitotalizing play would be intricately entwined with the events of May 1968 and their aftermath:

“[I]deological criticism, at the very moment when the need for it was again made brutally evident (May ’68), has become more sophisticated, or at least ought to do so. Moreover semiological analysis...has become the theoretical locus wherein a certain liberation of ‘the significant’, in our country and in the West, may well be enacted.”⁴⁰ Yet, emphasizing the liberation of significance, fundamental to the revolutionary promise many poststructuralist thinkers located in the events of May 1968, privileges the emancipatory side of an informational condition that makes possible not only the proliferation of difference represented in the protests of 1968 but at the same time also sets new, almost imperceptible limits on this proliferation, as demonstrated by the failure of such protests to bring about elemental changes in the systems of political economy against which they were directed.

Thus, as Patrick Brantlinger writes about poststructuralism, “By both its opponents and advocates, theory is often linked to the New Left and counterculture rebellions...All radical intellectuals, moreover, have been caught in the impasse of the counterrevolution that followed the eventful days of 1968.”⁴¹ Although he argues that, despite this, “the world is undergoing *radical* change whether we recognize it or not,”⁴² a critique of the experience of contemporary culture as a system of seemingly free signification whose constraints are consistently disavowed or minimized, one in which anything—even certain types of “radical change”—*appears* possible yet thorough, systemic socioeconomic change remains perplexingly unattainable, is perhaps the most pressing problematic for radical cultural theorists today. By contrast, the poststructuralist emphasis on free play deemphasizes the way that informational constraints, in advance of desires, not only affect the measurement of information, but also its *kind*. The information-theoretical conception of information anticipates certain *types* of meaning, or, as Terranova writes, it “operates as a form of probabilistic *containment* and *resolution* of the instability, uncertainty and virtuality of a process. It is thus implicated in a process by which alternatives are reduced and the uncertainty of processes is prepared for codification by a channel.”⁴³ The relative lack of consideration given to this narrowing and conditioning aspect, in favor of attention to the liberation of a seemingly infinite potential for semantic play, during the years surrounding the events of May 1968 is symptomatic of both the increasingly forceful articulations of difference through protest during this turbulent period *and* their eventual reabsorption into the supposedly limitless capacity of high-tech global capitalism. Indeed, Lydia Liu has recently made the provocative argument that the reception of poststructuralist “play,” at least in the Anglophone context, is largely predicated upon a similar disavowal: inherited from game theory and autonomized via the translation from English to French and back again of the term “game” (“*jeu*” in French) as either “free play” or simply “play,” “[t]he free play of signifiers becomes a blind play—oblivious to the traces of an earlier heterolinguistic supersign—which renders the sinister, calculating, and competitive ethos of the *jeu*/game of game theory invisible to the critical eye.”⁴⁴

Whether in French theory or its English-language reception, this lack of accentuation placed on the informational limits of such play has in many ways persisted up to the present day. Galloway is in many ways an exception but he, too, emphasizes, over the limitations of information as such, the correlation between the voluntary schema of protocol and the secondary order of human desire: “Protocol is not a superego (like the police); instead it always operates at the level of desire, at the level

of ‘what we want.’”⁴⁵ Likewise, Terranova acknowledges that, given “[t]he closure of the horizon of radical transformations that is implied in the probabilistic nature of information . . . [a] cultural politics of information . . . implies a renewed and intense struggle around the definition of the limits and alternatives that identify the potential for change and transformation,”⁴⁶ yet she also emphasizes that one way these limits can be subverted is via the virtuality flowing through and around them, a space “of the fluctuations that produce the unpredictable, of the interventions that break the space of possibility, of the choices that are no choices at all but a kind of quantum jump onto another plane.”⁴⁷ Ien Ang goes even further, doubling down on the post-structuralist project of semiotic emancipation to emphasize “the fundamental *uncertainty* that necessarily goes with the process of constructing a meaningful order.”⁴⁸ Despite foregrounding this uncertainty, however, she notes that it is nevertheless only “rare situations of ‘revolutions’ which are temporary moments of limitlessness”—thus presenting an opportunity to construct *new*, in a sense unforeseen, limits—while “it is within these limits that ‘resistance’ to the dominant takes place.”⁴⁹ The existence of this space of uncertain virtuality, however, has thus far proven virtually uncertain to upend the theoretically limitless, yet structurally limited informational milieu, highlighting the persistence of structure in poststructuralism and suggesting that explicit attention to the contours of these limits, and not simply the more improbable possibilities they contain, remains critical. The conflation of a seemingly infinite number of messages with a truly infinite capacity for meaning is perhaps the ideological fallacy of the postwar period, eventually finding expression in the endless play of agonistic language games that Lyotard poses against an increasingly efficiency-driven computerized society, *jeux* in which “the stakes would be knowledge (or information, if you will), and the reserve of knowledge—language’s reserve of possible utterances—is inexhaustible.”⁵⁰ Yet, when informational schemas are sufficiently vast as to appear infinite, a technocratic society can effectively obscure its ruthless efficiency by way of a competing spectrum of supposedly comprehensive potential meanings. Similarly, Lyotard’s emphasis on the “denotative, or knowledge, games” on which he bases his paralogical pragmatics over “prescriptive, or action, games,”⁵¹ downplays the ways in which even knowledge, in an informational society, tends to become increasingly instrumentalized, as exemplified in the form of software. In such a situation, protests become symbolic as the relation between meaning and action becomes programmatic, simultaneously placing constraints on both sides of this nexus.

Messages, Music, Actions

In 1968, practical access to the digital technologies approaching the levels of informational complexity described above, of course, remained largely the privilege of academics, scientists, military forces, and large corporations. Concerns about such schematization were, however, surprisingly prevalent in the aesthetic milieu of experimental, avant-garde composition, which both responded to and reflected these changes by reconsidering conceptions of musical composition. Indeed, as art historian Liz Kotz suggests, this connection between composition and information makes sense in part because “it is sound (along with speech) that was the medium that served as the model for the newly emerging fields of information

theory and communications.”⁵² If *The President’s Analyst* indicated—and in some ways presaged—the neoliberal problematic of a technocratic, cybernetic relationship between multinational corporations and national governments, this incipient process would, even earlier, both inspire and alarm those engaged in creating conceptually-oriented art, and particularly compositional scores. “Made by artists active in New York’s interdisciplinary neo-avant-garde, these pieces came out of an expanded sense of ‘music’ and an expanded sense of medium,”⁵³ writes Kotz in her crucial examination of the “event” scores of the early 1960s, noting the influence of new technologies and theories—including information theory—capable of, among other things, “reducing complex information to transmissible series of binary digits.”⁵⁴ Kotz traces these scores’ proliferation in the New York art world back to composer John Cage’s infamous 1952 piece *4’33”*. The work, in its original and most classical (but by no means only) form, features a pianist “performing” three movements consisting solely of letting down a piano lid, pausing, and then lifting it up again. The spread of such scores, in turn, is born out of an increasing perception, in compositional circles, of classical musical notation as inadequately able to represent a diversity of newly technologically analyzable sounds: “[S]uch fundamentally restructured sound properties . . . require radically reconfigured notions of the score.”⁵⁵ This conviction echoes those found alongside the rise of industrial capitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in its corresponding aesthetic paradigm, modernism, with the advent of Arnold Schoenberg’s serialism and Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo’s attempts, through the creation of *intonarumori* (“noise instruments”) to, as he put it, “*break out of this limited circle of sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds.*”⁵⁶

Technological developments in organizing and reproducing sound, then, situated alongside the multiplication of sound sources, posed grave challenges to the continuing dominance of a Western musical “high art” tradition based on the classical musical score in both the industrial and postwar eras. The crucial distinction between the two periods, of course, is not merely technical but has everything to do with the emergence of the United States, comparatively unscathed, from the traumas of World War II and its rising postwar hegemony in Western Europe.⁵⁷ Indeed, John Cage himself should not be considered wholly separate from this process. Kotz not only elucidates the connections between Cage’s work with chance and information theory, but describes it in terms redolent of the Lacanian “liberation of significance”: “[W]e can read Cagean indeterminacy—‘accepting what occurs,’ rather than suppressing what was not intended—as predicated on allowing communication systems to operate freely without controlling their outputs.”⁵⁸ In 1958, at the urging of composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, Cage spoke at the *Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik* in Darmstadt, Germany, the center of the postwar European compositional avant-garde—an event that, according to Bruce Altshuler, would influence the course he would subsequently teach at the New School to future American event score composers such as George Brecht and Jackson Mac Low.⁵⁹ Kotz, drawing a parallel with wartime applications of cybernetics, observes that these summer courses were initiated in 1946 as part of the reconstruction effort, and notes that, alongside the influence of information theory on the postwar German intelligentsia and “[h]owever neutralized they appear in postwar accounts, all these projects had

certain military entanglements.”⁶⁰ Frances Stonor Saunders goes further, writing that, at least at its outset, the course was “a bold initiative of the American military government” in its larger plan to promote European culture, and later the noncommunist left, as a bulwark against the USSR.⁶¹

Thus, as Kotz suggests, the subsequent “neutralization” of political and military entanglements is, of course, *anything but* neutral. Just as the change from antagonistics to agonistics signaled a new, technocratic stage of the Cold War and the expansion of the world market, the shift from the “military entanglements” of both cybernetics and the postwar European musical avant-garde to the politically “neutral” stance of information theory and post-serial composition has, as we have already begun to explore, highly ideological effects: the proliferation of a seemingly unlimited discourse that obscures its own limits. Indeed, Stockhausen’s turn to graphic notation with *Zyklus* (“Cycle”),⁶² written in 1959 (the year after Cage’s lectures in Darmstadt), attempts to offer a notational system capable of encapsulating both extreme chaos and extreme order. Written for a percussionist standing inside a circle of instruments, who may choose to play the piece by means of turning either in one direction or the other, “one experiences a temporal circle in which one has the impression of moving constantly in the direction toward ever-increasing ambiguousness (clockwise) or certainty (counterclockwise), although at the critical point where the extremes touch, one of them imperceptibly turns into the other.”⁶³ As Kotz, writing about such expanded notions of composition and performance in general, notes, “Despite the absence of the constraints provided by conventional musical notation, such realizations were far from ‘open’ or formless; instead the complex new notational forms employed by Cage, Sylvano Bussotti, Stockhausen et al entailed a different kind of discipline, grounded in conceptual invention and ‘problem-solving’ and often physically taxing enactment.”⁶⁴ Thus, while incorporating some elements of traditional notation, it is perhaps not surprising that portions of the score for *Zyklus* are also visually reminiscent of its contemporary technologies for containing precisely the levels of variation it attempts to represent: computer punch card instructions and circuit or logic diagrams.

Cage’s progeny in the New York art world would further evoke this link between notation and information technology, the practical application of information theory, in the event scores produced by artists affiliated with the Fluxus group, a crucial nexus between experimental composition and conceptual art. Such “scores” largely eschew musical (and often graphical) notation in favor of a series of textual instructions for the performance of the event. *4’33”* is a significant precedent for such works, writes Kotz, as it “effectively inaugurates the model of the score as an independent graphic/textual object, inseparably *words to be read* and *actions to be performed*. While this model is initiated by Cage, it is left to others to develop in a series of projects from 1959–1962.”⁶⁵ The event score thus shares an affinity with the software program—perhaps even more than an affinity, as Florian Cramer argues: “If software is generally defined as executable formal instructions, logical scores, then the concept of software is by no means limited to formal instructions for computers.”⁶⁶ Indeed, the conflation of word and action, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun argues, is intricately tied to the commodification of computer software, marked by the transition of the word “program” from a verb into a noun, and its

consequent susceptibility to the logic of mass reproduction, a complex process that took place roughly over the period from the end of the Second World War to the mid-1970s.⁶⁷ For Chun, this reification of source code “temporarily limits what can be decoded, put into motion, by setting up an artificial limit—the artificial limit of programmability—that seeks to separate information from entropy, by designating some entropy information and other ‘nonintentional’ entropy noise.”⁶⁸

Similarly, for the event score, as a conceptual schema for forward-thinking artists enabling interpretations by a broader range of actors than the trained performers of classical scores,⁶⁹ such conflation of word and action poses both its own, new possibilities and, again, barely perceptible limits. For Ian Pepper, this schema, and 4'33" in particular, calls into question the relation between word and *sound*: “By defining ‘music’ as writing on the one hand, and as sound on the other, and by erecting an absolute barrier between the two spheres, Cage initiated a crisis in music that has barely been articulated, let alone worked through.”⁷⁰ Yet, for some Fluxus-affiliated artists such as George Brecht, this schema did at least *seem* truly limitless. In a 1965 interview, he states, “Everything that happens is simply reorganization. Everything that exists is simply a process.”⁷¹ Kotz notes that, despite his being intimately aware of them and “[l]ike Cagean ‘indifference,’ modeled on a recording apparatus it overtly disavows, Brecht’s work represses the pivotal role of . . . more technicist models . . . instead stress[ing] the liberatory, anti-technological, and anti-instrumental nature of his project—to a sometimes-absurd degree,”⁷² but she also echoes poststructuralism in seeing the potential therein as in some sense inexhaustible: “Brecht’s most interesting scores reduce language to a kind of object, and yet also establish it as a kind of repeatable, replaceable structure, open to unlimited, unforeseeable realizations.”⁷³ Yet enabling this supposedly unlimited process of (re)arrangement nevertheless precludes the possibility of political thought, according to Brecht: “Thinking politically is impossible for me . . . That’s still an arrangement again.”⁷⁴

Some of the most interestingly political attempts to think through the implications of this situation for modern music can, however, be found in the work of another Fluxus-affiliated composer, Joseph Byrd. Although only mentioned in passing by Kotz as one Fluxus-related participant among many, Byrd’s work in the early 1960s includes the 1961 “event score” pieces *Fish: A Ballet for Woodwinds* and *Homage to Jackson Mac Low*, the former delineating a set of rules governing a musical performance resulting from a chance selection of cards, the latter describing a method by which words from the event score may be spoken, as performance, according to a nearly unintelligible pronunciation. In both cases, the rules of the performance must be rigorously adhered to (*Fish*: “‘Theatrical’ actions not necessary to the performance of the piece are to be avoided”; *Homage*: “Dramatic actions which do not contribute directly to the production of sound should be avoided.”⁷⁵) while the performance itself strains the limitations of its representational form (sheet music and written language, respectively). Barney Childs, one of Byrd’s early mentors, describes *An Anthology* . . . , the seminal collection in which these pieces are published, as extending the Cagean tradition to “complete the breakdown of barriers that had previously isolated and separated ‘art forms,’ moving into what [Dick] Higgins has called intermedia.”⁷⁶ By the mid-1960s, following his move to

Los Angeles, Byrd's work had begun to deal with the question of rule sets in a more explicitly political fashion; Childs, for example, noting a general concern with procedure over product in post-1960 American composition, highlights the element of protest in Byrd's "1966 theatre piece *Process*, in which the participating 'audience' moves through an extensive and tedious sequence of interviews, meaningless questionnaires, and forms, an isolation and intensification of the dehumanizing force of technology and the social sciences in our daily living."⁷⁷ *Process* thus in many ways exemplifies the paradox of the event score and, indeed, nearly all politically motivated art that accedes to the conflation of word and action in a post-information-theory discourse; it is a work that critiques its titular concept while simultaneously enacting it, emphasizing, as Pepper argues, "'the dialectic between negative/critical and mimetic/affirmative avant-gardist responses to bureaucratic rationality... central to the development of a critical model of interpretation of Cage,"⁷⁸ and thus the event score in general.

At the same time, Byrd would expand upon his intermedial explorations even further, notably working on an "electronic score" for experimental filmmaker Patrick O'Neill's short film *7362* (1965–1966).⁷⁹ He would also compose a piece, *The Defense of the American Continent from the Viet-Cong Invasion*, prompted, as Byrd remembered to Peter Doggett, by "the absurdity of the US Defense Department (no longer the 'War Department') entering into a longer and more protracted war in South-East Asia."⁸⁰ Performed in February 1966 at an avant-garde "happening" in Los Angeles, Byrd directed its performers,

representing ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] units, to improvise airplane sounds on their instruments, i.e. drones. They should start softly, and build until they intercepted the Viet Cong bomber threatening California. At whatever time each player reached the target, he would stop improvising, and begin playing a chorale arrangement I'd written of 'America the Beautiful,' which repeated until everyone had completed the mission. So there was a gradual transition from drone to hymn.⁸¹

As a piece of music, it was no doubt flabbergasting, although it apparently did not make much of an impact on the audience; as Byrd recalls, "the piece went by virtually unnoticed."⁸² It would be one of his last such pieces before, as Doggett writes, "[a]ware of the paradox of attempting to effect political change via an elitist medium, Byrd began to consider the subversive potential of experimental music rooted in the rock tradition."⁸³

Indeed, by the late 1960s, Byrd's musical work would come to revolve around the avant-rock group The United States of America. As Kevin Holm-Hudson's comprehensive piece on the group describes, Byrd founded the band with another composer, Michael Agnello, who quickly departed.⁸⁴ Carrying on with singer Dorothy Moskowitz, with whom he had worked in New York on a series of recordings of historically relevant American music, they began to gather a group of musicians and formulate a more song-oriented approach to experimental composition, though continuing to rely in part on musical scores.⁸⁵ As Byrd recalled to Holm-Hudson, "[T]he idea was that we were going to bring the avant-garde into rock."⁸⁶ The group's

sole album, its 1968 self-titled debut,⁸⁷ builds on the intermedial qualities of his earlier work to create a thoroughly postmodern pastiche; Holm-Hudson describes “[t]he album’s prevailing techniques” as “quotation, collage, and parody,”⁸⁸ identifying its primary components as nineteenth-century American music, electronic sound synthesis, and sixties rock styles. He also highlights “[t]he influence of leftist political thought on the [band],” whose music is often supported by pointedly political lyrics, including a paean to Che Guevara, murdered in Bolivia the previous year.⁸⁹ Of the album’s songs, perhaps most noteworthy here, however, given Byrd’s earlier conceptual concern with process, is “Coming Down,” to which Byrd wrote the music and co-wrote the lyrics with Moskowitz, detailing an acid-induced apprehension of the cyclical nature of reality as a process that, as Moskowitz sings, “just repeats the future and the past.” Indeed, while describing the psychedelic awakenings of the 1960s, today such a description also resonates with what sociologist Manuel Castells calls the “timeless time”⁹⁰ of late capitalism. Fittingly, this ode to altered consciousness and temporality would also, in a sense, mark the group’s synesthetic, multimedial apex, as O’Neill would return Byrd’s earlier favor by producing a promotional film for the song.

Given the inter-/multi-medial nature of the group’s work, it is no surprise that The United States of America’s musical and political aims were also inseparable, but they both proved too idiosyncratic for the group to find a home. In a letter to Richard Kostelanetz, Byrd describes the group thusly: “We were committed to a John Cagean catholic attitude combined with a critical approach to American culture. We were a left-wing band (‘Love Song for the Dead Che’), but one which had no constituency among the political left.”⁹¹ This lack of constituency held true even within the group; Byrd’s initial split with Agnello in fact stemmed from an ideological, proto-punk dispute over whether to record for Columbia, a major record label.⁹² While Agnello was of a more underground bent, Holm-Hudson writes, “Byrd, on the other hand, supported the aims of the American communists, particularly regarding use of the tools of capitalist production to advance revolutionary ideas from within the status quo.”⁹³ Just as his work leading up to The United States of America had grappled with issues of process and systemic representation through the medium of composition, Byrd’s intention with The United States of America was to articulate a critique of contemporary American society from within by combining a diverse assortment of sounds and styles from the past, present, and (imagined) future of music.⁹⁴ Such a project was better suited to the Southern Californian culture industry than the East Coast art scene (although Holm-Hudson argues that the group’s excursions into psychedelia could be considered more New York than Californian, “hint[ing] at a chemical experience more threatening than benign, in the spirit of the Velvet Underground rather than the Grateful Dead”⁹⁵), yet the group, like *The President’s Analyst*, would attract only a limited following; their one and only album reached its highest position on the *Billboard* charts, 181, in May 1968.⁹⁶

Byrd’s attempts to connect with a political audience in the world at large, as alluded to above, were equally fraught. In personal correspondence with Holm-Hudson, Byrd ascribes his attraction to and involvement with the CPUSA as due to it being

the one group that had discipline, an agenda, and was willing to work within the existing institutions to educate and radicalize American society. The surprise is that I lasted as long as I did (about 10 years). I left the party in the early 70s because of my view that women constituted an exploited economic class, a position so unorthodox it could not be tolerated.⁹⁷

Marginalized within the communist left for his unorthodox feminism, Byrd also considered his attempts to run the full-fledged version of *The United States of America* in an egalitarian manner a failure. In his letter to Kostelanetz he writes, "The idea was to create a radical experience. It didn't succeed. For one thing, I had assembled too many personalities; every rehearsal became group therapy. A band that wants to succeed needs a single, mutually acceptable identity."⁹⁸ Too insistently forward thinking to remain in party politics and not hierarchical enough to front a traditional rock group, Byrd's personal political quandaries mirrored those facing the group in the wake of their debut. Despite the fact that Byrd would go on to release a solo album the following year, Holm-Hudson's coda for the group is, as he notes, equally a coda for the radical politics of the era: "Caught in irreconcilable tensions between the idealism of theory and the pragmatism of practice, the breakup of the United States of America reflects similar tensions within the counterculture of 1968, as the slogans of the movement changed from 'we can change the world' to 'the whole world is watching' within the year."⁹⁹ Given the ambivalent legacy of mind-altering substances in the counterculture, "Coming Down" could even itself be a kind of anticipation of these developments; as at least one former member of the Free Speech Movement, Michael Rossman, would testify, "LSD led him to overestimate how much could be changed, and how quickly."¹⁰⁰

This hallmark of the era, the ultimately irreconcilable tension between theory and practice (indeed, between word and action), was also, David Harvey argues, its Achilles heel, key to the eventual reabsorption of many of the demands articulated in the movements of 1968 into a system of neoliberal economics and governmentality:

The objectives of social justice and individual freedom were uneasily fused in the movement of '68... Neoliberal rhetoric, with its foundational emphasis upon individual freedoms, has the power to split off libertarianism, identity politics, multiculturalism, and eventually narcissistic consumerism from the social forces ranged in pursuit of social justice through the conquest of state power... As such it proved more than a little compatible with that cultural impulse called "postmodernism."¹⁰¹

The complex development and entrenchment of neoliberal political economy, he argues, "really only converged as a new orthodoxy with the articulation of what became known as the 'Washington Consensus' in the 1990s,"¹⁰² a period that, following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the consequent decline of state communism, not coincidentally saw both an economic boom predicated on new developments in information technology with the rise of digital multimedia and the popularization and commercialization of the Internet and, on a significantly smaller

scale, a critical resurgence of interest in The United States of America's obscure pastiche of analog electronics, Cagean composition, nineteenth-century American music, and countercultural rock.¹⁰³ For Harvey, the emergence of neoliberalism out of the economic turbulence of the early 1970s, a period of stagnation for the West and the Eastern Bloc alike and thus the first economic downturn of this incipient stage of global capitalism, was anything but predictable: "In retrospect it may seem as if the answer was both inevitable and obvious, but at the time, I think it is fair to say, no one really knew or understood with any certainty what kind of answer would work and how."¹⁰⁴

Yet the epistemological foundations for a neoliberal "inclusivity" based upon individual freedom can be found in the cybernetic notion of control through feedback, information theory's conception of information as the "measure of one's freedom of choice when one selects a message,"¹⁰⁵ and the poststructuralist project of refashioning determinate signification within a system as "free play." Together, these theoretical concepts suggest a bi-directional system of communication based upon an unlimited multiplicity of meanings, but offer instead a systemically bounded conception of freedom obscuring the controls and limitations it necessarily requires. This problematic, already explored aesthetically in the post-Cagean event score of the early 1960s and, by 1967 with *The President's Analyst*, explicitly tied into a conception of a rising, technocratically organized global capitalism, would result, in 1968, in an explosive array of political movements demanding freedom from old, staid bureaucratic structures. As the film's concluding scene and its soundtrack, "Joy to the World," suggests, however, these demands would find avenues for their relative satisfaction in a globalizing neoliberalism, but only at the expense of a radical critique of capitalism itself, a situation exemplified in the failure of Joseph Byrd and The United States of America to find an audience, musical or political. *The President's Analyst* and *The United States of America* LP thus owe both their initial existence as (counter)cultural commodities and their relatively underappreciated legacies to being caught within this paradoxical nexus.

This is not to suggest, however, that the events of 1968 can only offer us lessons on the spread of global capitalism; they also hold truths for a properly radical critique of political economy. After the 1960s, as Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron write, "It is now impossible for any serious movement for social emancipation not to incorporate feminism, drug culture, gay liberation, ethnic identity and other issues pioneered by West Coast radicals."¹⁰⁶ A Marxism unable to recognize the ways in which a system fundamentally predicated upon economic exploitation can support and perpetuate inequalities based upon categories of identity such as gender, race, and sexual orientation, as it has historically always done, is in no position to point out the limits upon freedom set by capitalism. It is not the feminism of those such as Byrd that is responsible for the decline of popular anticapitalist movements over the past 40 years, but rather the inability of an anticapitalist critique to adequately address concerns such as these. Nevertheless, when the intervening years between 1968 and the present day have so decisively demonstrated the capacity of a neoliberal, global capitalism to accommodate any number of articulations of identity as merely so much information, it has once again become critical to explore not

only the breadth of its channel but its limits, no matter how imperceptible, lest the existence of meaning be forever defined by them and them alone.

In this sense we would do well to revisit one work of neo-avant-garde composition written by Byrd, this time in a slightly different context. Despite what is now a seemingly forgone conclusion, the ongoing cultural shift from antagonistic political ideologies to agonistic polemical positions during this period did not, of course, take place without struggle. As Arendt's analysis suggests, the brutality that older bureaucratic systems were willing to exercise in attempts to maintain their hold on power became particularly apparent all over the world in 1968, not only in a host of domestic incidents such as the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the May 1968 protests in France, and the Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico City, but also in international affairs such as the Soviet government's intervention into the "Prague Spring" and growing popular dissatisfaction in the United States with the proxy wars being fought in Southeast Asia in lieu of the Cold War turning "hot," under the theory of a "domino effect." It was in this context, alongside the growing significance of the student movement both in the United States and abroad, that, in 1969, the score to *The Defense of the American Continent from the Viet-Cong Invasion* would be published in *Notations*, a collection of graphical compositions collected by John Cage.¹⁰⁷ Astonishing enough in live performance, as a score, it is even more bewildering. As presented in *Notations*, it is simply a picture of a plane flying from Vietnam to California, as might be displayed on a flight tracking system, which delimits buffer zones between it and the coastline with lines drawn from the various campuses of the University of California converging on the plane (which, intriguingly, resembles a passenger jet more than a bomber) and suggests an interception in Zone 4 (see Figure 14.1). Popular—and especially countercultural—opposition

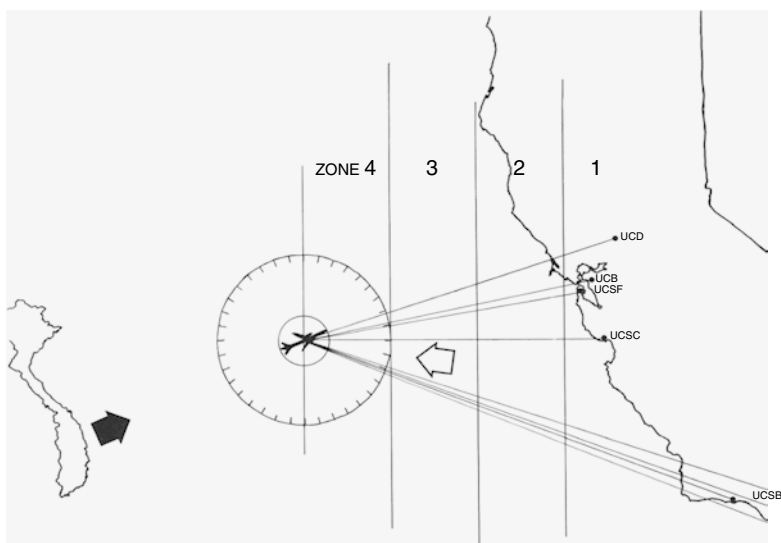


Figure 14.1 Joseph Byrd, *The Defense of the American Continent from the Viet-Cong Invasion* (1966/1968–69)

to the war would only grow between the piece's performance in early 1966 and its publication some three years later in the wake of 1968, rendering it, if anything, even more relevant at this later date. It thus highlights the technological and military disparity between the United States and its Viet-Cong enemy while simultaneously making connections between the conflict in Vietnam and not only campus ROTC organizations but, in this new context, the student protests of the antiwar movement.

In sending the score to Cage for inclusion in the collection, Byrd also sent an accompanying sheet of instructions that Cage omitted from the volume, a particularly significant choice since the sheet contains not only typed instructions but also some standard musical notation.¹⁰⁸ In this form, however, which is how it has largely been encountered since, the score becomes even more baffling and enigmatic. Cage's decision to separate the "instructions" from the "notations" and only print the latter, as he also did for other compositions in the volume, can be understood as a continuation or heightening of the "absolute barrier" that Pepper sees Cage as having inaugurated between word and sound. Indeed, for Kotz, following the event score, "the graphic esotericism of many of Cage's subsequent works . . . would produce an almost entirely arbitrary relation between 'score' and 'performance.'"¹⁰⁹ Without the accompanying instructions, the score thus becomes in danger of disappearing into an informational black hole and "bracketing the referent" of its performance, moving away from the conflation of word and action and into the literally unrealizable. Apprehending Byrd's piece in this context, Ben Arnold observes that the score "contains no standard or even decipherable musical notation. He presents no instructions on how to perform the work. The title and the map were only making statements that, according to Byrd, were what the war compositions of the time were all about."¹¹⁰ Yet at the same time, in Byrd's case this omission of instructions serves to promisingly shift the "absolute barrier" from the realm of the formal over into the political. Stripped of explication, Byrd's oblique graphic and title, evoking the political impossibility of a Viet-Cong invasion of the United States, sets it apart from the predominantly formalist interventions found in the rest of the collection.¹¹¹ There, its uninterpretable yet unmistakably political intentions open up a space between the politically committed art that German philosopher Theodor Adorno rejected as formally reactionary and the autonomous art—including modern classical music—whose form he championed as progressive but that had by this time become, as we have seen, in danger of offering nothing more than a false utopia of seemingly infinite informational play.¹¹²

In this sense, then, the work that might pose the most urgent question for us today is not that of either *The President's Analyst* or *The United States of America*, but rather this latter piece, considered in its published form as graphical notation. As Jameson notes in his foreword to the English translation of *The Postmodern Condition*, there is no guarantee that a terroristic, technocratic system would agree to disagree, that is, accede to paralogism; thus, Lyotard's fears of "a global private monopoly of information . . . like the rest of the private property system, cannot be expected to be reformed by however benign a technocratic elite, but can be challenged only by genuinely political (and not symbolic or protopolitical) action."¹¹³ Yet, as the same logic of programmability running from the event score to multimedia convergence

increasingly yokes action to the symbolic, genuinely political action can only fall outside of this conjunction, in a nonpragmatic action unassimilable to a less-than-ideal theory of information.¹¹⁴ Indeed, as Kotz notes, the move away from scores and toward a music they could not represent that took place in minimalism was a step in this direction, but one that often became caught up in debates over the ownership of more contemporary media of transcription, that is, recordings: “The historically productive breakdown of the communicative model of artistic production is that it requires us to rethink the boundaries between composition and performance or ‘interpretation.’ Yet...in the absence of conventional markers of authorship, legal and bureaucratic discourses are mobilized instead.”¹¹⁵ Today, then, taking our cue from the version of *The Defense of the American Continent from the Viet-Cong Invasion* found in *Notations*, a score that so blatantly seeks to represent the politically impossible, we might strive for, in its stead, an action that realizes that which remains utterly inarticulable within the ever-more-encompassing and programmatic informational field of the digital. Such an act would be—by definition—real, in the Lacanian sense; it would make actual what every virtuality, accident, or contingency can only intimate. Nothing less than such an action, one that, as Jameson would undoubtedly concur, can only be undertaken collectively, can reveal as artificial the invisible limits that everywhere confront us today. In so doing, we may encounter sand as more than silicon, and thus infuse with truly new meaning that old battle cry of 1968: *Sous les pavés, la plage!*

Notes

1. For example, Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, “The Californian Ideology” (revised version) <<http://www.imaginaryfutures.net/2007/04/17/the-californian-ideology-2/>> (a previous version is published in *Science as Culture* 26, no. 1 (1996), 44–72), and Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), 2nd edition with new preface (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 49–51 especially. For a perhaps more sympathetic view, see Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1993), 38–109.
2. Fredric Jameson, “Actually Existing Marxism” (1993) in *Valences of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 2010), 379.
3. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin, 2004), 108–115 and Maurizio Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labor” trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emory in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* eds. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 133–147.
4. Louis Althusser, “Contradiction and Overdetermination” (1962) in *For Marx* (1965) trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), 111.
5. For but a few considerations of this moment, see Ronald Fraser et al., *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988) and Kristin Ross, who, in *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), makes a particularly compelling case for the continuing relevance of the events of May 1968 in France to radical thought today. For a theoretical approach to the era overall, see Fredric Jameson, “Periodizing the 60s” (1984) in *The Ideologies of Theory* (London: Verso, 2008), 483–515.

6. Indeed, by the end of the film and presumably under Schaefer's continuing analysis, Kropotkin seemingly manages to combine the best of both worlds, remaining in the States *and* succeeding his father in the Soviet hierarchy.
7. Jameson, "Actually Existing Marxism," 398.
8. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 60.
9. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 73.
10. Ibid. and appendix XVI, 100–101.
11. Ibid., 81.
12. Jameson, "Actually Existing Marxism," 398. Here would also be the place to acknowledge, despite this minor point of debate, the general influence of Jameson's work on my own thinking, in particular and in addition to the above and other works cited herein, his *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 1–54 and, for this chapter especially, his "Foreword" (1984) to Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, vii–xxi. Indeed, in this latter text, Jameson notes that the question of contiguity vs. rupture between bureaucracy and technocracy is precisely one of the issues raised by Lyotard's "thematics of science and knowledge in its social form: one that raises issues of social class—is the technocracy produced by such a primacy of knowledge a bureaucracy or a whole new class?—and of socioeconomic analysis" (ibid., xiii). He further writes that Ernest Mandel, in *Late Capitalism* (1972) trans. Joris de Bres (London: New Left Books, 1975), "undertakes to show that . . . the new primacy of science and technological invention, and of the technocracy generated by that privileged position, as well as the shift from the older industrial technologies to the new informational ones . . . can be accounted for in classical Marxist terms, as indices of a new and powerful, original, global expansion of capitalism" (Jameson, "Foreword" to Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xiv). Yet he has also written that "'bureaucracy' itself needs to be rescued from its stereotypes, and reinvoked in the terms of the service and class commitment it has had at certain heroic moments of bourgeois society (while reminding people that the largest bureaucracies are in any case those of the big corporations)" (Jameson, "Actually Existing Marxism," 382).
13. See Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (1954) (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1988).
14. See Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings*, 34–35, 190–192.
15. Ibid., 15.
16. Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 122, emphasis in original. See also his (perhaps more favorable) consideration of Wiener's relation to protocol (105–107).
17. Ibid., 4.
18. The film industry itself is also a key aspect of any consideration of global networks of media and capital. For an examination of Hollywood cinema largely concerned with the post-1968 period (specifically 1967–1990), see Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), especially 11–48, although it is equally important to note the links between the industry and previous stages of the world market going back to the early twentieth century elaborated, for example, in Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907–1934* (London: British Film Institute, 1985).
19. Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 38.
20. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 63.
21. Ibid., 64.

22. Ibid., 66.
23. Ibid., emphasis in original.
24. Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The Mechanization of the Mind: On the Origins of Cognitive Science* (1994) trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 108. In this latter regard, other important precursors to the analysis presented here, albeit ones more focused on binary oppositions within “natural” language than the language of binary as such, are Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) and “Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and the Problem of the Subject” (1977) in *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 338–395.
25. Ibid., 107.
26. Jacques Lacan, “Psychoanalysis and Cybernetics, or On the Nature of Language” (1955) in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 305. Key considerations of Lacan’s engagement with cybernetics and information theory can be found in Dupuy, *The Mechanization of the Mind*, 107–110; John Johnston, *The Allure of Machinic Life: Cybernetics, Artificial Life, and the new AI* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 65–103; and Lydia H. Liu, “The Cybernetic Unconscious: Rethinking Lacan, Poe, and French Theory,” *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 288–320.
27. Johnston, *The Allure of Machinic Life*, 77. Johnston’s reading is based on Jacques Lacan, “Odd or Even? Beyond Intersubjectivity” (1955) in *Seminar II*, 175–190, which, as he notes, would eventually take the form, albeit without much in the way of explicit reference to cybernetics and information theory, of Lacan’s “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” in *Écrits* (1966) trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 6–48 (see Johnston, *The Allure of Machinic Life*, 75 and also Dupuy, *The Mechanization of the Mind*, 108).
28. Warren Weaver, “Recent Contributions to the Mathematical Theory of Communication” in Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (1949) (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 5.
29. Ibid., 6.
30. Ibid., 8–9, emphasis in original. The middle section of Weaver’s contribution, from which this quote is taken, is Weaver’s “interpretation” of Shannon’s work (ibid., 3n1).
31. Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 13.
32. Ibid., 9.
33. Indeed, this seems to be a fundamental aspect of not only cybernetics, but information theory as well. As Terranova notes, “From an informational perspective, communication is neither a rational argument nor an antagonistic experience... The information flow establishes a contact between sender and receiver by excluding all interference, that is by holding off noise. Interlocutors are not opposed, as in the traditional conception of the dialectical game, but they are *assumed* to be on the same side” (ibid., 15, emphasis in original).
34. Lacan, “Psychoanalysis and Cybernetics,” 300.
35. Ibid., 306–7.
36. Ibid., 304. See also Johnston, *The Allure of Machinic Life*, 94. Consider, furthermore, Weaver’s description (following Shannon) of the role of probability within an informational system in determining the next unit of information in a sequence, from which

- Lacan's own formulations of the primacy of the symbolic in meaning-making seem to stem (cf. note 27): "[A]s the successive symbols are chosen, these choices are, at least from the point of view of the communication system, governed by probabilities; and in fact by probabilities which are not independent, but which, at any stage of the process, depend upon the preceding choices" (Weaver, "Recent Contributions to the Mathematical Theory of Communication," 10–11). Finally, see the discussion of information theory and probability in Terranova, *Network Culture*, 20–27, especially 21–22.
37. Jacques Lacan, "Discourse Analysis and Ego Analysis" (1954) in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953–1954* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller trans. John Forrester (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 66.
 38. The distinction between the two responses resonates with the distinction between the traditional notion of ideology as false consciousness and Slavoj Žižek's reworking, via Peter Sloterdijk, of ideology as cynical practice (See Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) New Edition (London: Verso, 2008), 24–27).
 39. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966) in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass and Richard Macksey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 289. Macksey's earlier translation renders the latter sentence more forcefully: "This field is in fact that of *freeplay*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions in the closure of a finite ensemble" (Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play," in *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (1970) eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1972), 260).
 40. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957/1970) trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 9. The quintessential description of Barthesian play can be found in Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text" (1971) in *Image, Music, Text* trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 155–164.
 41. Patrick Brantlinger, *Crusoe's Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 10.
 42. *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.
 43. Terranova, *Network Culture*, 24.
 44. Liu, "The Cybernetic Unconscious," 292. Indeed, while Lacan's discourse can often be cryptic, he is probably speaking of *game/jeu* in this sense when, discussing the wide applicability of game theory, he says "It is not for nothing that the same word designates such diverse fields as well as the game of chance" (Lacan, "Psychoanalysis and Cybernetics," 300). This point is also supported by a translators' note to the earlier translation of Derrida's paper, where, Macksey notes, "[t]he word '*jeu*' is variously translated here as 'play,' 'interplay,' 'game,' and 'stake,' besides the normative translation 'freeplay'" (Derrida, "Structure Sign and Play," in *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. Macksey and Donato 247n1), as well as the discussion, following the paper's presentation, between Derrida and Jean Hyppolite, which touches on its information- and game-theoretical affinities, eliciting a description of structure from Derrida as "something which makes possible 'free play,' in the sense in which one speaks of the '*jeu dans la machine*'" (*ibid.*, 268).
 45. Galloway, *Protocol*, 241. Similarly, Lyotard, following Niklas Luhmann, writes that in an efficiency-driven postmodern society, "[a]dministrative procedures should make individuals 'want' what the system needs in order to perform well. It is easy to see what role telematics technology could play in this" (Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 62).
 46. Terranova, *Network Culture*, 25.
 47. *Ibid.*, 26. Derrida makes a similar point when he states, "For there is a *sure* play: that which is limited to the *substitution* of *given* and *existing*, *present*, pieces. In absolute

- chance, affirmation also surrenders itself to *genetic* indetermination, to the *seminal* adventure of the trace" (Derrida, "Structure Sign and Play," in *Writing and Difference*, 292).
48. Ien Ang, "In the Realm of Uncertainty: The Global Village and Capitalist Postmodernity," in *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 167.
 49. Ibid., 178. Ang's analysis is thus more suitable for registering resistance than eliciting the conditions for change.
 50. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 67.
 51. Ibid., 64–65.
 52. Liz Kotz, "Circuit and Score" in *See this Sound: Promises in Sound and Vision*, ed. Cosima Rainer, Stella Rollig, Dieter Daniels, and Manuela Ammer (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König/Linz: Kunstmuseum Lentos), 139.
 53. Liz Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the 'Event' Score," in *October* 95 (Winter 2001): 56.
 54. Ibid., 62.
 55. Ibid., 67. Kotz is here describing claims made by influential German music writer and composer Herbert Eimert.
 56. Luigi Russolo, "The Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto" (1919) in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, eds. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Continuum 2004), 11, emphasis in original. Friedrich Kittler's work on the role of gramophone technology in this process is also significant; see Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1986) trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), the discussion of Kittler in Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 69, and the references to Kittler in Terranova, *Network Culture*, 8, where she refers to the gramophone as the beginning of "the informatization of culture" (ibid.).
 57. Provocatively, and in line with the American nature yet seemingly global reach of *The President's Analyst's* The Phone Company, Ang makes a similar claim regarding what she sees as the high point of transmission/information theory: "[I]t shouldn't surprise that the transmission paradigm was particularly hegemonic in communication theory during the high period of American hegemony as the superpower within the modern capitalist world" (Ang, "In the Realm of Uncertainty," 165).
 58. Kotz, "Circuit and Score," 140. Elsewhere she refers to a "Cagean trajectory of desubjectivization" (ibid., 142). She also briefly notes the appeal of Shannon's theory for structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers, including Barthes (ibid., 139; see also Kotz's discussion of Barthes in relation to the event score in "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 59). For the influence of the Cagean ethos on Stewart Brand, a key figure connecting the counterculture and Northern Californian technoculture, see Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 45–48.
 59. Bruce Altshuler, "The Cage Class," in *FluxAttitudes* eds. Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood (Gent: Imschoot Uitgevers, 1991), 17, as cited in Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 65. Kotz's piece includes an extensive treatment of Cage's course at the New School and its influence.
 60. Kotz "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 66n29.
 61. Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 23. For more on US involvement in German music in the immediate aftermath of the war, see Alex Ross's excellent and informative history of twentieth-century compositional music, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 343–354.
 62. Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Nr. 9: Zyklus für einen Schlagzeuger* (1959). Graphic notation is musical notation that does not adhere to classical Western conventions for scoring (see

- Christoph Cox, "Visual Sounds: On Graphic Scores" in *Audio Culture*, ed. Cox and Warner, 187–188). Lyotard also notes as a key element of postmodern linguistic proliferation, alongside "machine languages" and "the matrices of game theory, new systems of musical notation" (Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 41).
63. Karlheinz Stockhausen, liner notes to Karlheinz Stockhausen and Mauricio Kagel, *Zyklus/Refrain/Transición II* (Time Records Series 2000 TIME S/8001, 1961).
 64. Kotz, "Circuit and Score," 142.
 65. Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 57.
 66. Florian Cramer, "Concepts, Notations, Software, Art" (2002) <http://www.netzliteratur.net/cramer/concepts_notations_software_art.html>. Cramer's *Words Made Flesh: Code, Culture, Imagination* (Rotterdam: Piet Zwart Institute, 2005) <<http://www.netzliteratur.net/cramer/wordsmadefleshpdf.pdf>> explores this conception of software from antiquity to the present. His reading of Cage's "indeterminate" works, based on the deliberate deployment of chance as in the rolling of a six-sided die, resonates strongly with the critique of the hidden limits of information theory offered above: "Since these results are foreseeable as the set of potential results, they represent not an ontological, but a deterministic chance...Ontological chance, and therefore true indeterminacy, would occur if the die would crack, vanish, or show the number seven" (ibid., 78).
 67. See Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 19–54.
 68. Ibid., 49.
 69. See Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 80–81.
 70. Ian Pepper, "From the 'Aesthetics of Indifference' to 'Negative Aesthetics': John Cage and Germany 1958–1972" in *October* 82 (Autumn 1997): 34; also quoted in Kotz "Post-Cagean Aesthetics" 57n6.
 71. Brecht in Ben Vautier and Marcel Alocco, "A Conversation about Something Else: an Interview with George Brecht" (1965) trans. Henry Martin in Henry Martin, *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire* (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1978), 70. Also quoted as part of a lengthier consideration of Brecht's work in Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 84n71, where she also writes that "Brecht's cult of non-involvement or non-differentiation at times leads to puerile statements (and intended provocations)."
 72. Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 68.
 73. Ibid., 88.
 74. Brecht in Vautier and Alocco, "A Conversation about Something Else," 68.
 75. Both published in *An Anthology of Chance Operations, Concept Art, Anti-Art, Indeterminacy, Improvisation, Meaningless Work, Natural Disasters, Plans of Action, Stories, Diagrams, Music, Poetry, Essays, Dance Constructions, Mathematics, Compositions* (1963) ed. La Monte Young 2nd ed. (New York: Heiner Friedrich, 1970), n.p. Although not strictly speaking a Fluxus production, this collection contains work from many Fluxus-affiliated artists, including George Brecht, and, furthermore, was designed by Fluxus founder George Maciunas (see Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 56n2). A more recent compilation contains recordings of several of Byrd's early compositional works, although unfortunately neither discussed here: Joseph Byrd, *NYC 1960–1963* (New World Records 80738, 2013).
 76. Barney Childs, "Directions in American Composition since the Second World War Part II: 1960–1975," *Music Educators Journal* 61, no. 7 (March 1975): 37. He further notes that "[i]n the later 1960s, a number of compositions were written involving 'multimedia'—lighting, 'theatre' or similar human activity..., prerecorded or realtime electronics, acoustic instruments played naturally or altered electronically, slides or film, readers

- or narrators in combination or all together—but this has become somewhat less popular in recent years” (ibid., 43–44). See also Dick Higgins, “Intermedia” (1965/1981) reprinted with an appendix by Hannah Higgins in *Leonardo* 34, no. 1 (February 2001): 49–54. Higgins anticipates *The President’s Analyst’s* Kropotkin in his justification for the historical relevance of intermedia: “We are approaching the dawn of a classless society, to which separation into rigid categories is absolutely irrelevant. This shift does not relate more to East than West or vice versa. Castro works in the cane fields. New York’s Mayor Lindsay walks to work during the subway strike” (ibid., 49). On Childs’ mentorship of Byrd, see Eric Smigel, “The Singularity of Sound in a Plurality of Vision: The Early Works of Joseph Byrd,” liner notes to *NYC 1960–1963*.
77. Childs, “Directions in American Composition since the Second World War,” 38–39. Childs’ article provides an excellent overview of issues and developments in postwar composition, including the significance of Cage, 4’33”, expanded notation, and other topics also examined by Kotz. He also notes that, in the case of Cage and other “indeterminate” composition, “The composer (and the performer) may be given access to random means, to chance and choice, in the realization of a performance. But the boundaries that these means establish are rigorously drawn and followed” (ibid., 36).
 78. Pepper, “From the ‘Aesthetics of Indifference’ to ‘Negative Aesthetics,’” 44n30.
 79. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1970), 99. According to the film’s credits, Michael Moore also contributed sound work.
 80. Joseph Byrd quoted in *Peter Doggett, There’s a Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars, and the Rise and Fall of the ‘60s* (New York: Canongate, 2007), 59.
 81. Byrd quoted in ibid.
 82. Byrd quoted in ibid.
 83. Ibid., 60.
 84. Kevin Holm-Hudson, “The ‘American Metaphysical Circus’ of Joseph Byrd’s United States of America” in *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, ed. Kevin Holm-Hudson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 47. The brief overview of the group here is indebted to Holm-Hudson’s piece; see also the short consideration of the band in Doggett, *There’s a Riot Going On*, 143–145.
 85. Holm-Hudson, “The ‘American Metaphysical Circus,’” 46–47.
 86. Joseph Byrd, personal correspondence with Kevin Holm-Hudson quoted in Ibid., 44.
 87. *The United States of America* (Columbia Records CS 9614, 1968).
 88. Holm-Hudson, “The ‘American Metaphysical Circus,’” 53.
 89. Ibid., 49.
 90. See Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 460–499.
 91. Joseph Byrd, personal correspondence with Richard Kostelanetz (1993), quoted in Richard Kostelanetz, *The Fillmore East: Recollections of Rock Theater* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1995), n. p.
 92. See Doggett, *There’s a Riot Going On*, 144 and Holm-Hudson, “The ‘American Metaphysical Circus,’” 47.
 93. Holm-Hudson, “The ‘American Metaphysical Circus,’” 47–48.
 94. Indeed, the biography included in *NYC 1960–1963* describes Byrd as “the first rock artist to use synthesis in combination with live instruments.”
 95. Holm-Hudson, “The ‘American Metaphysical Circus,’” 43–44.
 96. Ibid., 49.
 97. Byrd quoted in ibid., 48.
 98. Byrd in Kostelanetz, *The Fillmore East*, n.p.; partially quoted in Holm-Hudson “The ‘American Metaphysical Circus,’” 55.
 99. Holm-Hudson, “The ‘American Metaphysical Circus,’” 56. See ibid., 56–57 for a summary of the post-USA trajectories of Byrd and the group’s other members.

100. Fraser et al., 1968, 118.
101. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 41–42. Elsewhere he notes, “The neoliberal presumption of perfect information and a level playing field for competition appears as either innocently utopian or a deliberate obfuscation of processes that will lead to the concentration of wealth and, therefore, the restoration of class power” (ibid., 68).
102. Ibid., 13.
103. Holm-Hudson situates this renewed interest in the group in the late 1990s (“The ‘American Metaphysical Circus,” 41), and even notes in closing that, at that time, Byrd had started “LogoMusic, an Internet firm that develops musical ‘signatures’ and other soundtrack material for corporate websites” (ibid., 57). However, the British group Northern Picture Library’s “Love Song for the Dead Ché” single (Vinyl Japan TASK 6, 1993), featuring two, heavily electronicized, versions of the song, or even the more rock-like cover version of “Coming Down” by another British group, 14 Iced Bears (on the “Mother Sleep” EP, Thunderball 12 TBL 2, 1989), are indicators that this resurgence could be intriguingly related to the emergence of digital multimedia in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For more on the political, countercultural, and multimedial intersections of the early 1990s, see Barbrook and Cameron, “The Californian Ideology”; see also Harvey on information technology and neoliberalism in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 157–159.
104. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 13. As Jameson suggests, “We may also want to take into consideration the possibility that this period of stagnation . . . was in fact not restricted to the Soviet Union of the Brezhnev era, but had its equivalents worldwide” (Jameson, “Actually Existing Marxism,” 401). Galloway also cites the (Western) downturn in the 1970s (as well as “the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989”) as part of his own periodization of protocol (Galloway, *Protocol*, 26).
105. Weaver (interpreting Shannon), “Recent Contributions to the Mathematical Theory of Communication,” 9.
106. Barbrook and Cameron, “The Californian Ideology.”
107. *Notations* ed, John Cage with Alison Knowles (New York: Something Else Press, 1969), n.p.; Something Else Press was in fact established by intermedia progenitor Dick Higgins (see note 76).
108. Indeed, according to Byrd, these instructions, “as I recall, he chose not to print, as they were not ‘notation’ per se” (Joseph Byrd, personal correspondence, July 9, 2013). Although unpublished, the instructions largely comport with Byrd’s description of the 1966 performance above (see note 81), although they include directions to play “any Southern patriotic tune or any tune with the word ‘Texas’ in the title” in between the drone and the “America” portions of the piece. They can be found in Northwestern University’s John Cage *Notations* Project collection, Folder F-235, Item 1, see <<http://findingaids.library.northwestern.edu/catalog/inu-ead-mus-archon-1484>>. I am grateful to Gregory MacAyeal for providing me with access to this document. UCLA’s Joseph Byrd Musical Works and Papers Collection contains an audio recording of the piece’s performance in 1966 by the SMU Chamber Orchestra, Box 19, Item 4, see <<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf687007kg/dsc/>>.
109. Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics,” 71. Similarly, Childs writes about graphic notation in general, “Graphics may *be* the piece, for example, instead of a guide to actions that will make specific sounds” (Childs, “Directions in American Composition since the Second World War,” 41, emphasis in original).
110. Ben Arnold, “War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era” in *The Musical Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (Autumn 1991): 324. Arnold does not seem to be aware of either the existence of the instructions for or the 1966 performance(s) of the piece.

111. Byrd's piece appears to be one of only two pieces in the volume immediately recognizable as explicitly political, the other being Emmett Williams' 1963 *White for Governor Wallace*, which adheres to the more programmatic template found in the event score of the late 1950s and early 1960s.
112. See Theodor W. Adorno, "Commitment" (1962) trans. Francis McDonagh in Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukács, *Aesthetics and Politics* (1977) (London: Verso, 2007), 177–195. For a sense of how the limitations and transformations of autonomy played out within the art world in *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering*, a 1966 series of events stemming from a collaboration between neo-avant-garde artists, including Cage, and scientists from Bell Labs, see Michelle Kuo, "Beginning *9 Evenings*" in *Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices* ed. Marisa Jahn (Toronto: YYZBOOKS/New York: REV-, 2010), 68–73; Kotz mentions this event and cites an earlier version of Kuo's piece in "Circuit and Score," 142–143, while elsewhere she notes that "certain vexing questions about," among other things, "the material structures of new artistic/technical media occur implicitly in event scores in ways which have great relevance to more aggressively technologized works of the later 1960s" [Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 60n12]). Although, and especially when considered in hindsight, their imbrications with information theory are clear, like the other informational conceptions discussed here, Cage's earlier theories of chance and indeterminacy, considered alongside Adorno's aesthetic theory, nevertheless did seem to offer a model for emancipation in the period leading up to the transformations of 1968, and especially in terms of offering a way out from what seemed like the increasingly probable event of nuclear annihilation resulting from Cold War antagonisms; for more on this and the shifting nature of both autonomous art and popular culture in the early 1960s, see Andrew Lison, "'The very idea of place': Form, Contingency, and Adornian Volition in *The Man in the High Castle*" in *Science Fiction Studies* 122 (March 2014), 45–68.
113. Jameson, "Foreword" in Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xx; see also *ibid.*, xn3. As he argues in a different context, "*The Postmodern Condition* . . . becomes a symptom of the state it seeks to diagnose" (*ibid.*, xi). Elsewhere, he describes how "the well-nigh universal feeling of powerlessness that has dawned on an immense range of social strata around the globe since the end of the 1960s . . . takes the form of a sense of the massive, permanent, and non- or post-human immutability of our immeasurably complex institutions (despite their own ceaseless metamorphoses), which are most often imagined in high- or late-technological terms" (Jameson, "Actually Existing Marxism," 371), a characterization amply reflected in the figure of the informational field or channel, with its paradoxical relationship of limit and play, stasis and change. He continues: "The result is an instinctive belief in the futility of all forms of action or praxis . . . It is however, crucial to distinguish between this technological appearance, which is of course equally a cultural phenomenon, and the socioeconomic structures of late capitalism that still correspond to Marx's analyses" (*ibid.*, 371–372).
114. For more on the importance of emphasizing a radical disjuncture between word and action in an informational culture, a concept adapted from Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's *State of Exception* (2003) trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), see Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Andrew Lison, "Fun is a Battlefield: Software between Enjoyment and Obsession" in *Fun and Software: Exploring Pleasure, Paradox, and Pain in Computing*, ed. Olga Goriunova (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming 2014).
115. Kotz, "Circuit and Score," 142.

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